8 Liberalism

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READER'S GUIDE

The practice of international relations has not been accommodating to Liberalism. Whereas the domestic political realm in many states has witnessed an impressive degree of progress with institutions providing for order *and* justice, the international realm in the era of the modern states system has been characterized by a precarious order and the *absence of* justice. In the introductory section, the chapter will address this dilemma of Liberalism's false promise as well as considering the moments in history when Liberalism has impacted significantly on the theory and practice of international relations. Like all grand theory, Liberalism is an aggregation of a number of different ideas. Section two seeks to uncover the most important variations on the Liberal theme, beginning with the visionary liberal internationalism of the Enlightenment, through to the liberal idealism of the inter-war period, and ending with the liberal institutionalism which became popular in the immediate post-war years. This discussion begs two important questions, dealt with in section three. What has become of these three historic elements in liberal thinking on international relations? And how have contemporary writers situated in these various strands sought to cope with globalization? The final section summarizes the arguments that have gone before, as well as reflecting more broadly on the fate of liberalism in international relations at the end of the millennium.

Introduction

Although Realism is regarded as the dominant theory of international relations, Liberalism[1] has a strong claim to being the historic alternative. Rather like political parties, Realism is the 'natural' party of government and Liberalism is the leader of the opposition, whose main function is to hound the talking heads of power politics for their remorseless pessimism. And like historic parties of 'opposition', Liberalism has occasionally found itself in the ascendancy, when its ideas and values set the agenda for international relations. In the twentieth century, Liberal thinking influenced policy-making élites and public opinion in a number of Western states after the First World War, an era often referred to in academic International Relations as Idealism. There was a brief resurgence of liberal sentiment at the end of World War II, with the birth of the United Nations, although these flames of hope were soon extinguished by the return of cold war power politics. The end of the cold war has seen a resurgence of Liberalism as Western state leaders proclaimed a 'New World Order' and liberal intellectuals provided theoretical justifications for the inherent supremacy of Liberalism over all other competing ideologies.

One of the most respected contemporary theorists in the field, Stanley Hoffmann, once famously wrote that 'international affairs have been the nemesis of liberalism'. 'The essence of liberalism' Hoffmann continues, 'is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace' whereas 'the essence of international politics is exactly the opposite: troubled peace, at best, or the state of war' (Hoffmann 1987: 396). This explanation comes as no surprise to realists, who argue that there can be no progress, no law, and no justice, where there is no common power. The fact that historically international politics has not been hospitable to liberal ideas should not be interpreted as a surrender by liberals to the logic of power politics. Liberals argue that power politics itself is the product of ideas, and crucially, ideas can change. So, even if the world hasn't been accommodating to liberalism to date, this does not mean that it cannot be made into a liberal world order. Given this dis-

position, it is not surprising that Liberalism is described in the literature as the 'tradition of optimism' (Clark 1989: 49–66).

While the belief in the possibility of progress is one identifier of a liberal approach to politics, there are other general propositions that unite the various strands of liberalism. Perhaps the appropriate way to begin this discussion is with a three-dimensional definition. Liberalism is an ideology whose central concern is the liberty of the individual; liberals see the establishment of the state as a necessary part of preserving liberty either from harm by other individuals or by states; the state must always be the servant of the collective will, not the master, and democratic institutions are the means of guaranteeing this. Here it is important to note that Liberalism is primarily a theory of government, one that seeks to reconcile order (security) and justice (equality) within a particular community. But as we will see in the course of the chapter, many advocates of this tradition have recognized that providing order and justice on the 'inside' may not be possible without reform of the 'outside'. The argument being made here is a crucial one. As long as states continue to exist in relation to one another as individuals did in the state of nature, the liberal project of providing peace and progress will forever be undermined.

As is often the case with general theories of international politics, we quite quickly move from identifying assumptions shared by all liberals to the realization that there are fundamental disagreements. As Box 8.1 demonstrates, liberals offer radically different answers to what they take to be the pre-eminent dilemma in international relations, namely, why wars occur: are they caused by imperialism, the balance of power, or undemocratic regimes? Furthermore, liberals diverge on whether peace is the goal of world politics, or order? And how should this be established, through collective security, commerce, or world government? Finally, liberals are divided on the issue of how liberal states should respond to non-liberal states (or civilizations), by conquest, conversion, or toleration?

Box 8.1 Liberalism and the causes of war, determinants of peace

One of the most useful analytical tools for thinking about differences between individual thinkers or particular variations on a broad theme such as Liberalism, is to differentiate between levels of analysis. For example, Kenneth Waltz's *Man, The State and War* examined the causes of conflict operating at the level of the individual, the state, and the international system itself. The table below turns Waltz on his head, as it were, in order to show how different liberal thinkers have provided competing explanations (across the three levels of analysis) for the causes of war and the determinants of peace.

'Images' of Liberalism	Public figure/ period	Causes of conflict	Determinants of peace
First image: (Human nature)	Richard Cobden (mid-19th c.)	Interventions by governments domestically and internationally disturbing the natural order	Individual liberty, free trade, prosperity, interdependence
Second image: (The state)	Woodrow Wilson (early 20th c.)	Undemocratic nature of international politics; especially foreign policy and the balance of power	National self-determination; open governments responsive to public opinion; collective security
Third image: (The structure of the system)	J. A. Hobson (early 20th c.)	The balance of power system	A world government, with powers to mediate and enforce decisions

Key points

- Liberalism is fundamentally anchored around the liberty of the individual. Domestic and international institutions are to be judged according to whether they further this aim. But note that this basic principle allows for significant variations, for example, those who believe that freedom needs to be constrained for the greater good.

- From the eighteenth century onwards, Liberalism has exerted a strong influence on the practice of world politics.

- The high-water mark of liberal thinking in international relations was reached in the inter-war period in the work of idealists who believed that warfare was an unnecessary and outmoded way of settling disputes between states.

- In view of the significant divergences within the liberal tradition—on issues such as human nature, the causes of wars, and the relative importance different kinds of liberals place on the individual, the state, and international institutions in delivering progress—it is perhaps more appropriate to think of not one Liberalism, but contending liberalisms.

Varieties of Liberalism

Liberal thinking on international relations can be dimly perceived in the various plans for peace articulated by philosophers (and theologians) from the sixteenth century onwards. Such thinkers rejected the idea that conflict was a natural condition for relations between states, one which could only be tamed by the careful management of power through balance of power policies and the construction of

against the state which threatened international order. In 1517 Erasmus first iterated a familiar theme; war is unprofitable. To overcome it, kings and princes of Europe must desire peace, perform kind gestures in relations with fellow reigns in the expectation that these will be reciprocated. Other early liberal thinkers placed an emphasis upon the need for institutional structures to constrain international 'outlaws'. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, William Penn advocated a 'Diet' (or Parliament) of Europe. Indeed, there are some remarkable parallels between Penn's ideas and the institutions of the European Union today. Penn envisaged that the number of delegates to the Parliament should be proportional to the power of the state, and that legislation required a kind of 'qualified majority voting', or as Penn put it, the support of 75 per cent of the delegates.

These broad sketches of ideas from some of the progenitors of liberal thinking in international relations show how, from Penn's plans for a 'Diet' in 1693 to the Treaty on European Union in 1992, there are common themes underlying Liberalism; in this instance, the theme is the importance of submitting the separate 'wills' of individual states to a general will agreed by states acting collectively (see, for example, Kant's 'third definitive article' in Box 8.2). It would be wrong to suggest that the development of liberal thinking on international affairs has been linear. Indeed, it is often possible to portray current political differences in terms of contrasting liberal principles. To return to the Treaty on European Union mentioned above, the debate which raged in many European countries could be presented as one in which the liberal principle of integration was challenged by another liberal principle of the right of states to retain sovereignty over key aspects of social and economic policies.

How should we understand this relationship between autonomy and integration which is embodied in Liberalism? One way might be to apply a historical approach, providing detailed accounts of the contexts with which various philosophers, politicians and international lawyers contributed to the elaboration of key liberal values and beliefs. Although the contextual approach has merit it tends to downplay the dialogue between past and present, closing off the parallels between Immanuel Kant (an

eighteenth-century philosopher-king from Konigsberg) and Francis Fukuyama (the late twentieth-century political thinker and former employee of the US State Department). An alternative method, which is favoured in this chapter, is to lay bare the variety of liberalisms thematically rather than historically.[2] To this end, the following section identifies three patterns of thought as the principal constituents of Liberalism: liberal internationalism, idealism, and liberal institutionalism.

As Box 8.2 demonstrates, many of the great liberal figures such as Immanuel Kant believed that human potentiality can only be realized through the transformation of individual attitudes as well as the binding of states together into some kind of federation. In this sense, Kant combines a commitment to international institutions (embodied in both idealists and liberal institutionalists) as well as the liberal internationalists' belief that democratic forms of government are inherently superior. Like Kant, the thinking of many other great liberal thinkers reaches beyond the boundaries of any single category. For this reason it is important not to use the categories as labels for particular thinkers, but as representations of a discernible strand in the history of liberal thinking on international relations.

Liberal internationalism

Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham were two of the leading liberal internationalists of the Enlightenment. Both were reacting to the barbarity of international relations, or what Kant graphically described as 'the lawless state of savagery', at a time when domestic politics was at the cusp of a new age of rights, citizenship, and constitutionalism. Their abhorrence of the lawless savagery led them individually to elaborate plans for 'perpetual peace'. Although written over two centuries ago, these manifestos contain the seeds of key liberal internationalist ideas, in particular, the belief that reason could deliver freedom and justice in international relations. For Kant the imperative to achieve perpetual peace required the transformation of individual consciousness, republican constitutionalism and a federal contract between states to abolish war (rather than to regulate it as liberal

Box 8.2 Immanuel Kant's 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch'

First Definitive Article: The Civil Constitution of Every State shall be Republican

'If, as is inevitably the case under this constitution, the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise . . . . But under a constitution where the subject is not a citizen, and which is therefore not republican, it is the simplest thing in the world to go to war. For the head of state is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state, and a war will not force him to make the slightest sacrifice so far as his banquets, hunts, pleasure palaces and court festivals are concerned . . . ' (Kant 1991: 99–102)

Second Definitive Article: The Right of Nations shall be based on a Federation of Free States

'Each nation, for the sake of its own security, can and ought to demand of the others that they should enter along with it into a constitution, similar to a civil one, within which the rights of each could be secured . . . . But

peace can neither be inaugurated nor secured without a general agreement between the nations; thus a particular kind of league, which we will call a *pacific federation*, is required. It would be different from a *peace treaty* in that the latter terminates *one* war, whereas the former would seek to end *all wars* for good . . . . It can be shown that this idea of *federalism*, extending gradually to encompass all states and thus leading to perpetual peace, is practicable and has objective reality' (Kant 1991: 102–5).

Third Definitive Article: Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality

'The peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of rights in one part of the world is felt *everywhere*. The idea of a cosmopolitan right is therefore not fantastic and overstrained; it is a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and international right, transforming it into a universal right of humanity' (Kant 1991: 105–8).

realists such as Hugo Grotius had argued). This federation can be likened to a permanent peace treaty, rather than a 'superstate' actor or world government.

Jeremy Bentham tried to address the specific problem of the tendency among states to resort to war as a means of settling international disputes. 'But, establish a common tribunal', Bentham argued, and 'the necessity for war no longer follows from a difference of opinion' (Luard 1992: 416). Like many liberal thinkers after him, Bentham showed that federal states such as the German Diet, the American Confederation, and the Swiss League were able to transform their identity from one based on conflicting interests to a more peaceful federation. As Bentham famously argued, 'between the interests of nations there is nowhere any real conflict'. Note that these plans for a permanent peace imply an extension of the social contract between individuals in domestic society to states in the international system, in other words, subjecting the states to a system of legal rights and duties. But crucially, liberal internationalists—unlike the idealists of the inter-war period—believed

that a law-governed international society could emerge without a world government.

The idea of a natural order underpinning human society is the cornerstone of liberal internationalism. For the clearest statement of this position, we must turn to the Scottish political economist and moral philosopher, Adam Smith. By pursuing their own self-interest, individuals are inadvertently promoting the public good. The mechanism which intervenes between the motives of the individual and 'ends' of society as a whole, is what Smith referred to as 'an invisible hand'. Although Smith believed that the natural harmony between individual and state did not extend to a harmony between states (Wyatt Walter 1996: 28) this is precisely what was emphasized by liberal internationalists in the nineteenth century like Richard Cobden. In common with many key figures in the Liberal tradition, Cobden was a political activist as well as a writer and commentator on public affairs. He was an eloquent opponent of the exercise of arbitrary power by governments the world over. 'The progress of freedom' he compellingly argued, 'depends more upon the

maintenance of peace, the spread of commerce, and the diffusion of education, than upon the labours of cabinets and foreign offices' (Hill 1996: 114). For Cobden, politics was too important to be left to politicians.

It was primarily this liberal idea of a natural 'harmony of interests' in international political and economic relations which E. H. Carr attacked in his polemical work *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. Although Carr's book remains one of the most stimulating in the field, one 'which leaves us nowhere to hide' (Booth 1995b: 123), it could be argued that Carr incorrectly targets idealists of the interwar period as the object of his attack instead of the liberal internationalists of the nineteenth century. As we will see in the following section, rather than relying on a natural harmony to deliver peace, idealists fervently believed that a new international order had to be constructed, one which was managed by an international organization. This line of argument represents a significant shift from the nineteenth-century liberal internationalism to the idealist movement in the early part of the twentieth century.

Idealism

Like liberal internationalism, the era of idealism (from the early 1900s through to the late 1930s) was motivated by the desire to prevent war. However, many idealists were sceptical that *laissez faire* economic principles, like free trade, would deliver peace. Idealists, like J. A. Hobson, argued that imperialism—the subjugation of foreign peoples and their resources—was becoming the primary cause of conflict in international politics. For Hobson, imperialism resulted from underconsumption within developed capitalist societies. This led capitalists to search for higher profits overseas, which became a competitive dynamic between states and the catalyst for militarism, leading to war. Here we see a departure from the liberal internationalist argument that capitalism was inherently pacific. The fact that Britain and Germany had highly interdependent economies before the Great War (1914–18), seemed to confirm the fatal flaw in the liberal internationalist association of interdependence with peace. From the turn of the century, the

contradictions within European civilization, of progress and exemplarism on the one hand and the harnessing of industrial power for military purposes on the other, could no longer be contained. Europe stumbled into a horrific war killing fifteen million people. The war not only brought an end to three empires it was also a contributing factor to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The First World War shifted liberal thinking towards a recognition that peace is not a natural condition but is one which must be constructed. In a powerful critique of the idea that peace and prosperity were part of a latent natural order, the publicist and author Leonard Woolf argued that peace and prosperity required 'consciously devised machinery' (Luard 1992: 465). But perhaps the most famous advocate of an international authority for the management of international relations was Woodrow Wilson. According to the US President, peace could only be secured with the creation of an international institution to regulate the international anarchy. Security could not be left to secret bilateral diplomatic deals and a blind faith in the balance of power. Like domestic society, international society must have a system of governance which has democratic procedures for coping with disputes, and an international force which could be mobilized if negotiations failed. In this sense, liberal idealism rests on a domestic analogy (Suganami 1989: 94–113).

In his famous 'fourteen points' speech, addressed to Congress in January 1918, Wilson argued that 'a general association of nations must be formed' to preserve the coming peace (see Box 8.3). The League of Nations, was of course, the general association which idealists willed into existence. For the League to be effective, it had to have the military power to deter aggression and, when necessary, to use a preponderance of power to enforce its will. This was the idea behind the collective security system which was central to the League of Nations. Collective security refers to an arrangement where 'each state in the system accepts that the security of one is the concern of all, and agrees to join in a collective response to aggression' (Roberts and Kingsbury 1993: 30). It can be contrasted with an alliance system of security, where a number of states join together usually as a response to a specific external threat (sometimes known as collective defence). In

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Box 8.3 Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' and the realism of idealism

1. Open covenants openly arrived at.

2. Freedom of the seas alike in peace and war.

3. The removal of all economic barriers to trade . . .

4. Reduction of national armaments.

5. A readjustment of all colonial claims . . .

6. The evacuation of Russian territory and the independent determination by Russia of her own political development and national policy.

7. The evacuation and restoration of Belgium.

8. The evacuation and restoration of France and the return of Alsace-Lorraine.

9. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy along national lines.

10. Self-determination for the peoples of Austria–Hungary.

11. A redrawing of the boundaries of the Balkan states along historically established lines of nationality.

12. Self-determination for the peoples under Turkish rule . . .

13. The independence of Poland with free access to the sea guaranteed by international covenant.

14. The formation of a general association of nations under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

These '14 points' contain many idealist principles, in particular the importance of self-determination from colonial rule as well as the need for an international organization to maintain peace and security. But a close reading not just of the 14 points, but of the political context of the time, suggests that there was more than a twist of realism to the idealist principles articulated by Woodrow Wilson. This comes through strongly in the following passage. 'As a number of historians have shown, Wilson advanced his Fourteen Points for many reasons, but one, obviously, was a shrewd appreciation that liberal democracy was the best antidote to Bolshevism and reaction in a world turned upside down by global war. Even his support for self-determination was as much a strategic ploy as a moral demand. As the record reveals, the ultimate purpose of the slogan was not to free all nations, but rather to undermine the remaining empires on the European continent and win America friends in east and central Europe. Wilson understood, even if his later realist critics did not, the power of values and norms in international relations' (Cox, 2000: 6–7).

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the case of the League of Nations, Article 16 noted the obligation that, in the event of war, all member states must cease normal relations with the offending state, impose sanctions, and if necessary, commit their armed forces to the disposal of the League Council should the use of force be required to restore the status quo.

The experience of the League of Nations was a disaster. Whilst the moral rhetoric at the creation of the League was decidedly idealist, in practice states remained imprisoned by self-interest. There is no better example of this than the United States' decision not to join the institution it had created. With the Soviet Union outside the system for ideological reasons, the League of Nations quickly became a talking shop for the 'satisfied' powers. Hitler's decision in March 1936 to reoccupy the Rhineland, a designated demilitarized zone according to the

terms of the Treaty of Versailles, effectively pulled the plug on the League's life-support system (it had been put on the 'critical' list following the Manchurian crisis in 1931 and the Ethiopian crisis in 1935). Indeed, throughout the 1930s, the term crisis had become the most familiar one in international affairs.

Although the League of Nations was the principal organ of the idealist inter-war order, it is important to note other ideas which dominated liberal thinking in the early part of the twentieth century. Education became a vital addition to the liberal agenda, hence the origins of the study of International Relations as a discipline in Aberystwyth in 1919 with the founding of the Woodrow Wilson professorship. One of the tasks of the Wilson Professor was to promote the League of Nations as well as contributing to 'the truer understanding of civilizations other than

our own' (John *et al.* 1972: 86). It is this self-consciously normative approach to the discipline of International Relations, the belief that scholarship is about what ought to be and not just what is, that sets the idealists apart from the institutionalists who were to carry the torch of liberalism through the early post-1945 period.

Outside of the military–security issue area, liberal ideas made an important contribution to global politics even during the cold war. The principle of self-determination, championed by liberal internationalists for centuries, signalled the end of empire. The protection of individuals from human rights abuses was enshrined in the three key standard setting documents: the 1948 Universal Declaration, the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Even the more radical calls in the mid-1970s for a 'New International Economic Order' emanating from poorer post-colonial states contained within it the kernel of a liberal defence of justice as fairness. The problem of the uneven distribution of wealth and power between the 'developed' and the 'developing' world is one which has been championed by a succession of liberal state-leaders, from the 1980 Brandt Report (named after the former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt) to the 1995 report by the Commission on Global Governance, chaired by Ingvar Carlson (then Swedish Prime Minister) and Shridath Ramphal (former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth).

Liberal institutionalism

According to the history of the discipline of International Relations, the collapse of the League of Nations signified the end of idealism. There is no doubt that the language of liberal institutionalism was less avowedly normative; how could anyone assume progress after Auschwitz? Yet certain fundamental tenets remained. Even in the early 1940s, there was a recognition of the need to replace the League with another international institution with responsibility for international peace and security. Only this time, in the case of the United Nations there was an awareness among the framers of the Charter of the need for a consensus between the

Great Powers in order for enforcement action to be taken, hence the veto system (Article 27 of the UN Charter) which allowed any of the five permanent members of the Security Council the power of veto. This revision constituted an important modification to the classical model of collective security (Roberts 1996: 315). With the ideological polarity of the cold war, the UN procedures for collective security were still-born (as either of the superpowers and their allies would veto any action proposed by the other).[3] It was not until the end of the cold war that a collective security system was operationalized, following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August 1990 (see Box 8.4.)

An important argument by liberal institutionalists in the early post-war period concerned the state's inability to cope with modernization. David Mitrany, a pioneer integration theorist, argued that transnational co-operation was required in order to resolve common problems (Mitrany 1943). His core concept was ramification, meaning the likelihood that co-operation in one sector would lead governments to extend the range of collaboration across other sectors. As states become more embedded in an integration process, the 'cost' of withdrawing from co-operative ventures increases.

This argument about the positive benefits from transnational co-operation is one which lies at the core of liberal institutionalism (and remains central to neo-liberal institutionalists, as noted in the following section). For writers such as Haas, international and regional institutions were a necessary counterpart to sovereign states whose capacity to deliver welfare goals was decreasing (1968: 154–8). The work of liberal institutionalists like Mitrany and Haas, provided an important impetus to closer co-operation between European states, initially through the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. Consistent with Mitrany's hypothesis, co-operation in the energy sector provided governments with the confidence to undertake the more ambitious plan for a European Economic Community enshrined in the Treaty of Rome in 1956.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new generation of scholars (particularly in the US) influenced by the European integration literature, began to examine in greater analytical depth the impact of modernization on the states system.[4] In particular,

> ### Box 8.4 Case study 1: The Gulf War and collective security
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> Iraq had always argued that the sovereign state of Kuwait was an artificial creation of the imperial powers. When this political motive was allied to an economic imperative, caused primarily by the accumulated war debts following the eight-year war with Iran, the annexation of Kuwait seemed to be a solution to Iraq's problems. The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, also assumed that the West would not use force to defend Kuwait, a miscalculation which was fuelled by the memory of the support the West had given Iraq during the Iran–Iraq war (the so-called 'fundamentalism' of Iran was considered to be a graver threat to international order than the extreme nationalism of the Iraqi regime).
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> The invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 led to a series of UN resolutions calling for Iraq to withdraw unconditionally. Economic sanctions were applied whilst the US-led coalition of international forces gathered in Saudi Arabia. Operation 'Desert Storm' crushed the Iraqi resistance in a matter of six weeks (16 January to 28 February 1991). The Gulf War had certainly revived the UN doctrine of collective security, although a number of doubts remained about the underlying motivations for the war and the way in which it was fought (for instance, the coalition of national armies was controlled by the US rather than by a UN military command as envisaged in the Charter). President Bush declared that the war was about more than one small country, it was about a 'big idea; a new world order'. The content of this new world order was 'peaceful settlement of disputes, solidarity against aggression, reduced and controlled arsenals, and just treatment of all peoples'.

they rejected the state-centric view of the world adopted by both traditional realists and behaviouralists. World politics, according to liberal institutionalists (or pluralists as they are often referred to) were no longer an exclusive arena for states, as it had been for the first three hundred years of the Westphalian states system. In one of the central texts of this genre, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argued that the centrality of other actors, such as interest groups, transnational corporations and international non-governmental organizations, had to be taken into

consideration (1972). Here the overriding image of international relations is one of a cobweb of diverse actors linked through multiple channels of interaction.

Although the phenomenon of transnationalism was an important addition to the International Relations theorists' vocabulary, it remained underdeveloped as a theoretical concept. Perhaps the most important contribution of pluralism was its elaboration of interdependence. Due to the expansion of capitalism and the emergence of a global culture, pluralists recognized a growing interconnectedness between states which brought with it a shared responsibility for the environment. The following passage sums up this position neatly:

> We are all now caught up in a complex systemic web of interactions such that changes in one part of the system have direct and indirect consequences for the rest of the system. (Little 1996: 77)

Clearly absolute state autonomy, so keenly entrenched in the minds of state leaders, was being circumscribed by interdependence. Moreover, this process is irreversible (Morse 1976: 97). Unlike realists however, liberal institutionalists believe that the decline of state autonomy is not necessarily regrettable, rather, they see transnationalism and interdependence as phenomena which must be managed.

Key points

- **Liberal internationalism:** The strand in liberal thinking which holds that the natural order has been corrupted by undemocratic state leaders and out-dated policies such as the balance of power. Prescriptively, liberal internationalists believe that contact between the peoples of the world, through commerce or travel, will facilitate a more pacific form of international relations.

- **Idealism:** Although there are important continuities between liberal internationalism and idealism, such as the belief in the power of world public opinion to tame the interests of states, idealism is distinct in that it believes in the importance of constructing an international order. For idealists, as opposed to internationalists, the freedom of states is part of the problem of international relations

tions and not part of the solution. Two requirements follow from their diagnosis. The first is the need for explicitly normative thinking: how to promote peace and build a better world. Second, states must be part of an international organization, and be bound by its rules and norms.

- Central to idealism was the formation of an international organization to facilitate peaceful change, disarmament, arbitration, and (where necessary) enforcement. The League of Nations was founded in 1920 but its collective security system failed to prevent the descent into world war in the 1930s. The victor states in the wartime alliance against Nazi Germany pushed for a new international institution to represent the society of states and resist aggression. The United Nations Charter was signed in June 1945 by fifty states in

San Francisco. It represented a departure from the League in two important respects. Membership was near universal, and the great powers were able to prevent any enforcement action from taking place which might be contrary to their interests.

- **Liberal institutionalism:** The third figure in the pattern of Liberalism. In the 1940s, liberal institutionalists turned to international institutions to carry out a number of functions the state could not perform. This was the catalyst for integration theory in Europe and pluralism in the United States. By the early 1970s, pluralism had mounted a significant challenge to realism. It focused on new actors (transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations) and new patterns of interaction (interdependence, integration).

Three liberal responses to globalization

The previous section has delineated three elements in the history of liberal thinking on international relations. Below, the chapter will bring this conversation between contending liberalisms up to date, hence the prefix 'neo' attached to each variant. Although the underlying arguments within each element remain constant, there have been discernible shifts in the political purposes to which those arguments have been utilized.

Neo-liberal internationalism

One of the 'big ideas' in the theory and practice of international relations in the 1990s is known as 'the democratic peace thesis'. The kernel of this argument, which can be traced back to Kant's philosophical sketch on Perpetual Peace, is that liberal states do not go to war with other liberal states. In this sense, liberal states have created what Michael Doyle has termed, a 'separate peace'. Although liberal states are pacific in relation to other liberal states, Doyle recognizes that liberal democracies are as aggressive as any other type of state in their rela-

tions with authoritarian regimes and stateless peoples (Doyle 1995b: 100).

Although the empirical evidence seems to support the democratic peace thesis, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of the argument. In the first instance, for the theory to be compelling, supporters of the 'democratic peace thesis' must provide an explanation as to why war has become unthinkable between liberal states. Over two centuries ago, Kant argued that if the decision to use force was taken by the people, rather than by the prince, then the frequency of conflicts would be drastically reduced. But logically this argument implies a lower frequency of conflicts between liberal and non-liberal states, and this has proven to be contrary to the historical evidence. An alternative explanation for the 'democratic peace thesis' might be that liberal states tend to be wealthy, and therefore have less to gain (and more to lose) by engaging in conflicts than poorer authoritarian states. Perhaps the most convincing explanation of all is the simple fact that liberal states tend to be in relations of amity with other liberal states. War between Canada and the US is unthinkable, perhaps not because of their liberal democratic

constitutions, but because they are friends (Wendt, 199: 298–99). Indeed, war between states with contrasting political and economic systems may also be unthinkable because they have a history of friendly relations. An example here is Mexico and Cuba, who although claiming a common revolutionary tradition nevertheless embrace antithetical economic ideologies.

Irrespective of the scholarly search for an answer to the reasons why liberal democratic states are more peaceful, it is important to note the political consequences of this hypothesis. In 1989 Francis Fukuyama wrote an article entitled 'The End of History' which celebrated the triumph of liberalism over all other ideologies, contending that liberal states were more stable internally and more peaceful in their international relations (Fukuyama 1989: 3–18). Whilst restating a familiar liberal internationalist theme, albeit with a Hegelian spin, Fukuyama's article and subsequent book served the political purpose of underlining the superiority of American values, thereby providing legitimacy to those who sought to 'export' liberalism. It was no longer a case of liberalism in one country, as it had appeared to some realists during the cold war, but rather liberalism for all countries.

What instruments are available to states to spread liberal values and widen the zone of peace? There are a wide range of options open to Western states in their attempt to globalize liberalism. At one end of the spectrum, the collapse of state structures (for example, in Somalia or Yugoslavia) prompts many liberals to call for forcible humanitarian intervention. But as critics from the realist 'right' and critical theory 'left' often argue, intervention even for liberal reasons often exacerbates the problem. Since the question of humanitarian intervention is dealt with in detail in Chapter 22 the paragraphs below will focus on the non-military instruments at the disposal of state leaders and international institutions for promoting liberal values in global politics.

At the political level, the powerful states in the international system are able to use institutional leverage as a means of embedding formerly non-liberal states into the liberal world order. The EU has done this extensively in its relations with former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. The 'bargain' can be seen in terms of material rewards

(access to the single market and structural adjustment funds) in return for accepting western values in the economic and political/social spheres. Increasingly, the US has used a combination of punitive and rewarding strategies to spread liberal ideas in previously illiberal parts of the world (see Box 8.5).

Box 8.5 Defending and extending the liberal zone of peace

Contemporary liberal internationalists believe history proves that liberal states act peacefully towards one another. Yet this empirical law does not tell liberal states how to behave towards non-liberal states. Should they try to convert them, thereby bringing them into the zone of peace, or should they pursue a more defensive strategy? The former has not been successful in the past, and in a world of many nuclear weapons states, crusading could be suicidal. For this reason, Michael Doyle suggests a dual-track approach.

- The first track is preserving the liberal community which means forging strong alliances with other like-minded states and defending itself against illiberal regimes. This may require liberal states to include in their foreign policy strategies like the balance of power in order to contain authoritarian states.

- The second track is more expansionist and aims to extend the liberal zone by a variety of economic and diplomatic instruments. He categorizes these in terms of 'inspiration' (hoping peoples living in non-democratic regimes will struggle for their liberty), 'instigation' (peace-building and economic restructuring) and 'intervention' (legitimate if the majority of a polity is demonstrating widespread disaffection with their government and / or their basic rights are being systematically violated).

Doyle concludes by warning liberals against assuming that the march of liberalism will continue unabated. It is in our hands, he argues, whether the international system becomes more pacific and stable, or whether antagonisms deepen. We must be willing to pay the price—in institutional costs and development aid—to increase the prospects for a peaceful future. This might be cheap when compared with the alternative of dealing with hostile and unstable authoritarian states (Doyle, 1999).

In relations with the Third World, where there are fewer prospects for exerting regional institutional leverage, the most effective tool has been conditionality: the policies developing countries must pursue in return for economic benefits such as loans or investment. More recently, conditionality has expanded from the requirement to liberalize and privatize the economic sector, to include targets on 'good governance', and compliance to human rights norms. While proponents might claim some successes, its reception in Asia has been contested. The rapid economic development of some Asian states has made them economically less dependent on Western aid or expertise, and at the same time they have become increasingly critical of the liberal internationalist assumption that liberal values are universally shared. The Australian dilemma, illustrated in Case Study 2 (Box 8.6) between promoting human rights in the Asia-Pacific region without damaging its economic and security interests, might serve as a microcosm for future relations between a weaker West and a potential economic colossus like China.

The attempt by Western states to globalize liberalism has highlighted a number of endemic weaknesses in the neo-liberal internationalist position.[5] First, from an intellectual point of view, theorists like Doyle and Fukuyama are complacent about the degree to which their own society is indeed liberal and prone to overestimate the number of stable liberal democracies in the world. Second, a defeat for Stalinist-style communism does not mean that liberalism has triumphed over all other ideologies. Social democracy remains an important ideology in Northern Europe, and a variety of forms of non-liberal constitutionalism exist, for example, in Asia and to a lesser extent in Japan. Third, Western states have done little to remove the suspicion among radicals in their own countries and public opinion in South-East Asia, that the project of spreading liberal values is a convenient fiction for promoting the commercial interests of Western firms. Finally, the neo-liberal internationalist agenda of the 1990s highlights the often conflicting principles which underpin liberalism. Promoting economic liberalization, particularly in economically impoverished countries, frequently comes into conflict with the norms of democracy and human rights. Two examples illustrate this dilemma. First, the more the

West becomes involved in the organization of developing states' political and economic infrastructure, the less those states are able to be accountable to their domestic constituencies, thereby cutting through the link between the government and the people which is so central to modern liberal forms of representative democracy (Hurrell and Woods 1995: 463). Second, in order to qualify for Western aid and loans, states are often required to meet harsh economic criteria requiring cuts in many welfare programmes; the example of the poorest children in parts of Africa having to pay for primary school education (Booth and Dunne, 1999: 310)– which is their right according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—is a stark reminder of the fact that economic liberalism and political liberalism are frequently opposed.

Neo-idealism

Like the idealists of the inter-war period, neo-idealists have a good deal in common with liberal internationalism: both share a commitment to democratic forms of government, and both believe that interdependence breeds peace. That said, neo-idealists believe that peace and justice are not natural conditions, they are the product of deliberate design. Moreover, the processes of globalization have added to the enormity of this task. Encouraging or even coercing non-liberal states to become more democratic is only part of what is required in order to bring about a truly liberal world order. Consistent with the original idealists, neo-idealists argue that reform needs to take place at the international level: like states themselves, international institutions need to be made more democratic.[6] Similarly, neo-idealists believe that global social movements must be brought into the decision-making structures, since these are often closer to ordinary people than their own governments. In addition to tackling the global 'democratic deficit', neo-idealists are more prone to point to the dark side of globalization than liberal internationalists. These arguments are discussed in greater length below.

Liberal internationalists tend to use the term globalization in positive ways, as though we lived in a global village, signifying economic and moral

Box 8.6 Case study 2: Promoting liberal values in an illiberal region — The Australian dilemma*

How can Australia, with its broadly Western liberal values, be accepted by northern neighbours such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines? Is it enough that the countries of the region share common interests (in trade and maintaining a stable order) or are there cultural barriers to co-operation? The case of Australian–Indonesian relations is a fascinating example of the conundrum over what happens when the fault-lines between civilizations come to the surface. Decades of diplomatic indifference were brought to an end in 1988, when the two Foreign Ministers began negotiating the Timor Gap Zone of Co-operation Treaty, outlining agreed boundaries for mineral exploitation in the Timor Sea. Undoubtedly the normalization of bilateral relations with Indonesia is beneficial for trade and security. However, Indonesia has one of the worst human rights records in world politics: democracy is not part of its political culture, political protests are put down with excessive violence, and the operations of the Indonesian Army are guided by the goal of imposing order through terror.

The brutality of the Indonesian army towards East Timor in particular has received widespread condemnation ever since the occupation of that part of the island in 1975. Slow but important steps towards democratization in the late 1990s presented the rest of the world with an opportunity to pressurize the Indonesian Government into holding a referendum on whether the East Timorese wanted independence or a continuation of the status quo. This strategy bore fruit, and when given the chance, on 30 August 1999, the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for independence (despite significant levels of intimidation). The ensuing campaign of terror indicated that Indonesia's pledge to ensure peace and security in the province was not being fulfilled; moreover, there was mounting evidence that the Indonesian Army was funding the militia groups. Australia responded to this crisis robustly, calling for an interim international peacekeeping force. Indonesia was initially reluctant to accept such a force, especially one led by an 'outsider' in the region. Days of lobbying by key state leaders and international financial institutions—Indonesia is in receipt of massive loans following the collapse of its currency in 1997/8—forced Indonesia to capitulate. On 20th September 1999, the first troops of 'Operation Stabilize' arrived in East Timor and began the process of restoring peace and security in the newly independent state.

What implications does this case hold for understand-

ing the defence of human rights? The case is a fascinating one for the reason that Asia has always militantly defended its right to determine its own affairs; according to the 'ASEAN way' sovereignty is not thought to be something that should be compromised in the way that many smaller European states accept (even encourage). Yet here we had an Australian-led force, with a robust mandate, defending the right of the East Timorese to democracy and self-determination. Ten years earlier, most commentators would have regarded such a scenario as completely implausible. How then did it become possible? One set of reasons concerns the changing standard of what counts as acceptable behaviour in international society. The balance between sovereignty and human rights has tipped significantly in favour of the latter in times of crisis. Moreover, even those governments less prone to crusading for human rights, find themselves being forced to defend them. This is exactly the position that Australia found itself in. Although it was the Labor governments of the Hawke–Keating–Evans era who lent considerable support to the pursuit of human rights norms in international relations, it was their right-wing successor who risked soldiers lives in pursuit of those ends. Arguably, the fact that the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Alexander Downer, did not aggressively pursue human rights in foreign policy might have made them seem more acceptable to the region. What is clear is that had Australia rationally calculated its interests in a realist manner, it would not have advocated the need for an interventionary force. This was bound to antagonize the Government in Jakarta who Australia needs good relations with for reasons of trade and security. How, then, was it able to placate both Indonesia and the wider region? Perhaps the best argument is that Australia was able to present itself as a 'bridging power' between the political cultures of Europe and North America and those of its Asian neighbours. Mindful of the concerns of many Asian states, Australia focused its attention on security the support of ASEAN countries such as Thailand and the Philippines as a means of convincing Indonesia of the operation's legitimacy (Dunne, Hill, and Hanson: 2000).

* In this case study the collective noun 'Australia' is used in the knowledge that there are multiple identities in Australian political culture. The referent, therefore, is the Australian government/state.

interconnectedness. Yet for more radical neo-idealists, the world seems more like a scene from the film Blade Runner with post-modern technologies coexisting with ethical anarchy and urban decay. Neo-idealists like Richard Falk recognize that globalization and community are frequently at odds with each other. 'This tension between the ethical imperatives of the global neighbourhood and the dynamics of economic globalisation', he argues, is 'an evasion that has been characteristic of all post-Wilsonian variants of liberal internationalism' (1995a: 573). In this sense, neo-liberal internationalism has fallen prey to the neo-liberal consensus which minimizes the role of the public sector in providing for welfare, and elevates the market as the appropriate mechanism for allocating resources, investment, and employment opportunities. Although the globalization of liberalism has improved the per capita income of the vast majority of the world's population, the rate of increase among the powerful states has been far greater. According to the United Nations Development Programme the share of global income of the richest fifth of the world's population is 72 times greater than the poorest fifth. The average daily income of these 'have-nots' is less than $1 a day.[7]

Neo-idealists offer a radically different set of prescriptions to liberal internationalists. At the level of international institutions, writers such as David Held, Norberto Bobbio, and Danielle Archibugi (Archibugi and Held 1995) among others, believe that global politics must be democratized. Held's diagnosis begins by revealing the inadequacies of the 'Westphalian order' (or the modern states-system which is conventionally dated from the middle of the seventeenth century). During the latter stages of this period, we have witnessed rapid democratization with a number of states, but this has not been accompanied by democratization of the society of states (Held 1993). This task is increasingly urgent given the current levels of interconnectedness, since 'national' governments are no longer in control of the forces which shape their citizens' lives (for example, the decision by one state to permit deforestation has environmental consequences for all states). After 1945, the UN Charter set limits to the sovereignty of states by recognizing the rights of individuals in a whole series of human rights con-

ventions. But even if the UN had lived up to its Charter in the post-1945 period, it would still have left the building blocks of the Westphalian order largely intact, namely: the hierarchy between great powers and the rest (symbolized by the permanent membership of the Security Council); massive inequalities of wealth between states; and a minimal role for non-state actors to influence decision-making in international relations.

In place of the Westphalian and UN models, Held outlines a 'cosmopolitan model of democracy'. This requires, in the first instance, the creation of regional parliaments and the extension of the authority of such regional bodies (like the European Union) which are already in existence. Second, human rights conventions must be entrenched in national parliaments and monitored by a new International Court of Human Rights. Third, reform of the UN, or the replacement of it, with a genuinely democratic and accountable global parliament. Without appearing to be too sanguine about the prospects for the realization of the cosmopolitan model of democracy, Held is nevertheless adamant that if democracy is to thrive, it must penetrate the institutions and regimes which manage global politics.

Neo-idealism emphasizes not just macro-institutional democratic reform, but also democratization at the 'grass-roots'. Radical liberals like Richard Falk argue that global civil society has emancipatory potential. The evolution of international humanitarian law, and the extent to which these laws are complied with, is largely down to the millions of individuals who are active supporters of human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (Falk 1995b: 164). Similarly, global protest movements have been largely responsible for the heightened global sensitivity to environmental degradation. This emphasis by neo-idealists on what Falk calls 'globalization from below' is an important antidote to mainstream liberalism's somewhat status quo oriented world view which sanctifies market forces, and seeks only piecemeal reform of international institutions such as the UN.

Neo-liberal institutionalism

In the 1980s, pluralism metamorphosed into neo-liberal institutionalism.[8] One of the problems with the former 'label' is that few of the thinkers actually identified themselves with the movement. By contrast, liberal institutionalism has attracted some of the most prolific and influential thinkers in the field, and has become the new orthodoxy in a number of key North American schools of International Relations. In addition to a high degree of self-identification on the part of contemporary liberal institutionalists, the second important revision to the earlier pluralism can be identified in the far more focused research agenda of liberal internationalism. The third and most substantive revision to pluralism concerns the shift back towards a state-centric approach to world politics (a shift signalled by Keohane and Nye in 1977).

The core principles of neo-liberal institutionalism can be distilled into the following four principles.

- **Actor:** Liberal institutionalists take for granted the state as a legitimate representation of society. Although emphasizing the importance of non-state actors in his early pluralist work, Robert Keohane's understanding of neo-liberal institutionalism admits that non-state actors are subordinate to states (Keohane 1989a: 8).

- **Structure:** Liberals broadly accept the structural condition of anarchy in the international system, but crucially, anarchy does not mean co-operation between states is impossible, as the existence (and proliferation) of international regimes demonstrates. In short, regimes and international institutions can mitigate anarchy by reducing verification costs, reinforcing reciprocity, and making defection from norms easier to punish (see Chapter 14).

- **Process:** Integration at the regional and global level is increasing. Here the future direction of the European Union is considered to be a vital test case for neo-liberal institutionalism.

- **Motivation:** States will enter into co-operative relations even if another state will gain more from the interaction, in other words, 'absolute gains' are more important for liberal institutionalists than 'relative gains' (emphasized by neo-realists).

It is vital to bear in mind the context out of which

neo-liberal institutionalism developed. Leading neo-liberal institutionalists such as Axelrod, Keohane, and Oye, developed their ideas in response to Kenneth Waltz's theory of neo-realism outlined in his 1979 work *Theory of International Politics*. Moreover, this response was from within the mainstream, as opposed to the radical critical theory challenge from the margins which also developed in the 1980s (Ashley 1984; Cox 1981). Given this context, it is not surprising that neo-liberal institutionalism often seems closer to contemporary realism than to the tradition of liberal thinking about international relations.

As the analysis of neo-idealism demonstrates, radical liberals do not take the state for granted. Legitimacy is not something that states possess by right, but something which has to be earned through humane government and democratic procedures. Moreover, early liberal institutionalists, such as Mitrany and Haas, were sceptical about whether states could deliver liberal goals of order and justice even if they had the will. Accordingly, they prescribed devolving power down to local government, regional assemblies or up to supra-state organizations or world government.

Apart from a considerable divergence between the complacent statism of neo-liberal institutionalism and the scepticism towards the state shown by early liberal institutionalists, there is one other significant demarcation between neo-liberal institutionalism and the other two elements in liberal thinking. Both liberal internationalism and idealism were wider ranging, more critical, and above all, more *political* than contemporary neo-liberal institutionalism (Long, 1996). (For a much more in depth analysis of neo-liberal institutionalism, see Chapter 9). In its defence, Keohane is justly critical of the naive assumption of classical liberal internationalists that commerce breeds peace. A free trade system, according to Keohane, provides incentives for co-operation but does not guarantee it. Here he is making an important distinction between co-operation and harmony. 'Co-operation is not automatic', Keohane argues, 'but requires planning and negotiation' (1989: 11). On this point, we see an interesting overlap between the inter-war idealists and neo-liberal institutionalism. However, the fact that both camps see co-operation as the handiwork of individuals and

institutions (as opposed to being part of a natural order) should not blind us to the point that Keohane et al see the role of institutions as regulating interests rather than transforming identities, as neo-idealists believe.

Key points

- The research agenda of neo-liberal internationalism is dominated by the debate about liberal states: how far the liberal zone of peace extends, why relations within it are peaceful, and what pattern is likely to evolve in relations between liberal states and authoritarian regimes? Crucially, in the post-cold war era, neo-liberal internationalists have lent their voices in support of Western (particularly American) attempts to use the levers of foreign policy to put pressure on authoritarian states to liberalize.

- Neo-idealists have responded to globalization by calling for a double democratization of both international institutions and domestic state structures. Radical neo-idealism is critical of mainstream liberalism's devotion to 'globalization from above' which marginalizes the possibility of change from below through the practices of global civil society.

- The most conventional of all contemporary liberalisms is neo-liberal institutionalism. At the centre of their research programme is how to initiate and maintain co-operation under conditions of anarchy. This task is facilitated by the creation of regimes. Notice that neo-liberal institutionalists share with realists the assumption that states are the most significant actors, and that the international environment is anarchic. Their accounts diverge, however, on the prospects for achieving sustained patterns of co-operation under anarchy

Conclusion and postscript: the crisis of Liberalism

There is something of a crisis in contemporary liberal thinking on international relations. The euphoria with which liberals greeted the end of the cold war in 1989 has to a large extent been dissipated; the great caravan of humanity, kick-started with the revolutions of 1989, is once again coming to a spluttering halt. Successive post-cold war conflicts, in Afghanistan, Liberia, Chechnya, Somalia, Burundi, and Rwanda (to name a few) remind us that in many parts of the world, the conditions which fuelled these tensions in the cold war period remain in place; for example, the geopolitical rivalry to grant massive arms transfers to states involved in 'civil' wars.

The audit of global politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century, from a liberal point of view, begins to take on a much darker hue when the wars of the former Yugoslavia are included. Unlike the tragedies of Rwanda and Burundi, the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo took place on the doorstep of the liberal zone. How could the national hatreds exhib-

ited by all the warring parties take root once again in Western soil? Liberal internationalists like Michael Ignatieff despaired that acts of ethnic cleansing had returned to haunt Europe fifty years after the Holocaust. After all, it was the Enlightenment which provided a vocabulary for articulating liberal ideas such as human rights and humanitarian law. 'What made the Balkan wars so shocking' argued Ignatieff, 'was how little these universals were respected in their home continent' (1995).

In the remaining paragraphs, by way of a response to Ignatieff, I suggest two explanations for the growing disenchantment with Liberalism. First, as we have seen throughout the chapter, Liberalism does not have a single voice; moreover, competing liberal arguments can often be used to defend different positions. The imperative to intervene in the wars of the former Yugoslavia, advocated by Ignatieff and other liberal internationalists, is backed up by the cosmopolitan liberal principle of the equal worth of all individuals: a sentiment captured by the words of

Box 8.7 Key concepts of Liberalism

Collective security

Refers to an arrangement where 'each state in the system accepts that the security of one is the concern of all, and agrees to join in a collective response to aggression' (Roberts and Kingsbury, 1993: 30).

Conditionality

The way in which states or international institutions impose conditions upon developing countries in advance of distributing economic benefits.

Cosmopolitan model of democracy

Associated with David Held, and other neo-idealists, a cosmopolitan model of democracy requires the following: the creation of regional parliaments and the extension of the authority of such regional bodies (like the European Union) which are already in existence; human rights conventions must be entrenched in national parliaments and monitored by a new International Court of Human Rights; the UN must be replaced with a genuinely democratic and accountable global parliament.

Democratic peace

A central plank of liberal internationalist thought, the democratic peace thesis holds that war has become unthinkable between liberal states.

Democracy promotion

The strategy adopted by leading Western states and institutions—particularly the US—to use instruments of foreign and economic policy to spread liberal values. Advocates make an explicit linkage between the mutually reinforcing effects of democratisation and open markets.

Enlightenment

Associated with rationalist thinkers of the eighteenth century. Key ideas (which some would argue remain mottoes for our age) include: secularism, progress, reason, science, knowledge, and freedom. The motto of the Enlightenment is: 'Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own understanding' (Reiss 1991: 54).

Idealism

Idealists seek to apply liberal thinking in domestic politics to international relations, in other words, institutionalize the rule of law. This reasoning is known as the domestic analogy. According to idealists in the early twentieth century, there were two principal requirements for a new world order. First: state leaders, intellectuals, and public opinion had to believe that progress was possible. Second: an international organization had to be created to facilitate peaceful change, disarmament, arbitration, and (where necessary) enforcement. The League of Nations was founded in 1920 but its collective security system failed to prevent the descent into world war in the 1930s.

Integration

A process of ever closer union between states, in regional or international context. The process often begins by co-operation to solve technical problems, referred to by Mitrany as ramification.

Interdependence

A condition where states (or peoples) are affected by decisions taken by others; for example, a decision to raise interest rates in Germany automatically exerts upward pressure on interest rates in other European states. Interdependence can be symmetric, i.e. both sets of actors are affected equally, or it can be asymmetric, where the impact varies between actors.

Liberalism

An ideology whose central concern is the liberty of the individual. For most liberals, the establishment of the state is necessary to preserve individual liberty from being destroyed or harmed by other individuals or by other states. But the state must always be the servant of the collective will and not (as in the case of Realism) the master.

Liberal institutionalism

In the 1940s, liberals turned to international institutions to carry out a number of functions the state could not perform. This was the catalyst for integration theory in Europe and pluralism in the United States. By the early 1970s, pluralism had mounted a significant challenge to realism. It focused on new actors (transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations) and new patterns of interaction (interdependence, integration).

Liberal internationalism

The strand in liberal thinking which holds that the natural order has been corrupted by undemocratic state leaders and outdated policies such as the balance of power. Prescriptively, liberal internationalists believe that contact between the peoples of the world, through commerce or travel, will facilitate a more pacific form of international relations. Key concept of liberal internationalism: the idea of a harmony of interests.

Box 8.7 continued

Normative

The belief that theories should be concerned with what ought to be, rather than merely diagnosing what is. Norm creation refers to the setting of standards in international relations which governments (and other actors) ought to meet.

Pluralism

An umbrella term, borrowed from American political science, used to signify International Relations theorists who rejected the realist view of the primacy of the state and the coherence of the state-as-actor.

World government

Associated in particular with those idealists who believe that peace can never be achieved in a world divided into separate sovereign states. Just as the state of nature in civil society was abolished by governments, the state of war in international society must be ended by the establishment of a world government.

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the poet John Donne, 'any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind'. But other liberals, of a more communitarian persuasion, argue that our obligations to all of humankind are less significant than our duties to citizens of our own state. On this line of argument, the tragedy in Bosnia may diminish us all, but this is not a sufficient reason to risk the lives of our fellow citizens in defence of abstract moral universals. How can Liberalism be our guide when, from different perspectives, it can support intervention and non-intervention? Hoffmann is surely right to argue that the case of degenerating states reveals how sovereignty, democracy, national self-determination, and human rights 'are four norms in conflict and a source of complete liberal disarray' (1995: 169).

A deeper reason for the crisis in Liberalism, and one which is prompted by Ignatieff's argument, is that it is bound up with an increasingly discredited Enlightenment view of the world (Laidi, 1998). Contrary to the hopes of liberal internationalists, the application of reason and science to politics has not brought communities together. Indeed, it has arguably shown the fragmented nature of the political community, which is regularly expressed in terms of ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences. Critics of Liberalism from the left and right view the very idea of 'moral universals' as dangerous. Communitarian-minded liberals worry that the universalizing mission of liberal values such as democracy, capitalism, and secularism, undermine the traditions and practices of non-Western cultures (Gray 1995: 146). Radical critics are also suspicious of the motives for promoting liberal values. The Marxist writer Immanuel Wallerstein has a nice way of putting this in terms of universalism as 'a "gift" of the powerful to the weak' which places them in a double-bind: 'to refuse the gift is to lose; to accept the gift is to lose' (in Brown, 1999). The key question for Liberalism at the dawn of a new century is whether it can reinvent itself as a non-universalizing, non-Westernizing political idea, which preserves the traditional liberal value of human solidarity without undermining cultural diversity.

QUESTIONS

1 Do you agree with Stanley Hoffmann that international affairs are 'inhospitable' to Liberalism? What arguments might one draw upon to support or refute this proposition?

2 Was the language of international morality, used by idealists, a way of masking over the interests of Britain and France in maintaining their dominance of the post-World War I international system?

3   Are democracies more peaceful than authoritarian states? If so, why?

4   Should liberal states promote their values abroad? If so, by what means?

5   How much progress (if any) has there been in liberal internationalist thinking since Kant?

6   Which element of Liberalism best explains the development of the European Union, (neo)liberal institutionalism or (neo)idealism?

7   Are all forms of Liberalism premissed on an optimistic view of human nature?

8   Evaluate the success of Australia's foreign policy towards Indonesia and the Asia-Pacific Region? Has it been a good liberal citizen in the region?

9   What do neo-liberal institutionalists have in common with idealists? At what point do their accounts of international relations diverge?

10   Given the different strands in liberal thinking, can we meaningfully talk about a coherent liberal tradition?

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Excellent general discussions of Liberalism include the following: S. Hoffmann, *Janus and Minerva* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987), 394–436; M. J. Smith, (1992), 'Liberalism and International Reform', in T. Nardin and D. Mapel (eds.), *Traditions of International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Useful short extracts from classical liberal thinkers are contained in E. Luard (ed.), *Basic Texts in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1992). Two recent edited collections have much to say about Liberalism and how liberal states should conduct international relations: M. Cox, G. J. Ikenberry, and T. Inoguchi (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1–17; and T. V. Paul and J. A. Hall, *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For thought-provoking critiques of Liberalism as a theory of politics and society, see John Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Z. Laidi, *A World Without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Politics*, trans. J. Burham and J. Coulon (London: Routledge, 1998). Critical essays on Liberalism in international relations can be found in the 'Millennium Special Issue', *The Globalization of Liberalism?* 24: 3 (1995); and Michael Cox, Ken Booth, and Tim Dunne (eds.), *The Interregnum: Controversies in World Politics 1989–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

NOTES

1. Upper case 'Liberalism' signifies the broad Liberal tradition in international thought, whereas lower case 'liberalism' signifies a particular kind of liberal thinking, or an individual liberal thinker. International Relations refers to the academic discipline, and international relations refers to the practices of international actors.

2. For an alternative system of classifying liberalisms, see Doyle (1995).

3. Between 1945 and 1990, there were 232 resolutions vetoed, between 1990 and 1994, there were only 4 vetoes.

4. Arguably, pluralism is an inadequate term in view of its usage in political philosophy to denote a form of liberalism which privileges difference over universalism.

5. For an excellent discussion of the 'crisis of liberal internationalism', see Hoffmann (1995).

6. The link between the inter-war idealists, and the work of writers who I have termed 'neo-idealist' is brought out well by Luigi Bonanate (1995).

7. 'Ten Years of Human Development', *Human Development Report* 1999, the United Nations Development Programme, www.undp.org.

8. Often referred to in the literature as either neo-liberal institutionalism (Keohane 1989) or simply neo-liberalism.

7 Realism

Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt

READER'S GUIDE

Realism is the dominant theory of International Relations. Why? Because it provides the most powerful explanation for the state of war which is the regular condition of life in the international system. This is the bold claim made by realists in defence of their tradition, a claim which will be critically examined in this chapter. The second section will ask whether there is one Realism or a variety of Realisms? The argument presented below suggests that despite important differences, particularly between historical realism and structural realism, it is possible to identify a shared core which all realists subscribe to. Section three outlines these common elements: self-help, statism, and survival. In the final section, we will return to the question how far Realism is relevant for explaining or understanding *our* world? Although it leaves many areas of the globalization of world politics uncharted, Realism's emphasis upon material forces such as state power remains an important dimension of international relations after the cold war.

Introduction: the timeless wisdom of Realism

The story of Realism most often begins with a mythical tale of the idealist or utopian writers of the inter-war period (1919–39). Writing in the aftermath of World War One, the 'idealists', a term that realist writers have retrospectively imposed on the inter-

war scholars, focused much of their attention on understanding the cause of war so as to find a remedy for its existence. Yet according to the realists, the inter-war scholars' approach was flawed in a number of respects. They, for example, ignored the role of

power, overestimated the degree to which human beings were rational, mistakenly believed that nation-states shared a set of common interests, and were overly passionate in their belief in the capacity of humankind to overcome the scourge of war. The outbreak of World War Two in 1939 confirmed, for the realists at least, the inadequacies of the inter-war idealists' approach to studying international politics.

A new approach, one based on the timeless insights of Realism, rose from the ashes of the discredited idealist approach.[1] Histories of the academic field of International Relations describe a Great Debate that took place in the late 1930s and early 1940s between the inter-war idealists and a new generation of realist writers, which included E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, Frederick Schuman, George Kennan, and others, who all emphasized the ubiquity of power and the competitive nature of politics among nations. The standard account of the Great Debate is that the realists emerged victorious, and the rest of the International Relations story is, in many respects, a footnote to Realism.[2] It is important to note, however, that at its inception, there was a need for Realism to define itself against an alleged 'idealist' position. From 1939 to the present, leading theorists and policy-makers have continued to view the world through realist lenses. The prescriptions it offered were particularly well suited to the United States' rise to become the global hegemon (or leader). Realism taught American leaders to focus on interests rather than ideology, to seek peace through strength, and to recognize that great powers can coexist even if they have antithetical values and beliefs. The fact that Realism offers something of a 'manual' for maximizing the interests of the state in a hostile environment explains in part why it remains 'the central tradition in the study of world politics' (Keohane 1989a: 36). This also helps to explain why alternative perspectives (see Ch. 11) must of necessity engage with, and attempt to go beyond, Realism.

The theory of Realism that became dominant after World War Two, which we will describe as modern realism (1939–79), is often claimed to rest on an older, classical tradition of thought. The very idea of the timeless wisdom of Realism suggests that modern realism has a number of intellectual antecedents, which we will call classical realism (up to the twen-

tieth century). Indeed, many contemporary realist writers often claim to be part of an ancient tradition of thought that includes such illustrious figures as Thucydides (c. 460–406 BC), Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). The insights that classical realism offered on the way in which state leaders should conduct themselves in the realm of international politics are often grouped under the doctrine of *raison d'état*, or reason of state. Together, writers associated with *raison d'état* are seen as providing a set of maxims to leaders on how to conduct their foreign affairs so as to ensure the security of the state. Many successful leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth century have claimed to follow the timeless principles of classical realism.

According to the historian Friedrich Meinecke, '*Raison d'état* is the fundamental principle of international conduct, the State's First Law of Motion. It tells the statesman what he must do to preserve the health and strength of the State' (Meinecke 1957: 1). Most importantly, the state, which is identified as the key actor in international politics, must pursue power, and it is the duty of the statesperson to calculate rationally the most appropriate steps that should be taken so as to perpetuate the life of the state in a hostile and threatening environment. For realists of all stripes, the survival of the state can never be guaranteed, because the use of force culminating in war is a legitimate instrument of statecraft. As we will see, the assumption that the state is the principal actor coupled with the view that the environment in which states inhabit is a perilous place help to define the essential core of Realism. There is, however, one issue in particular that theorists associated with *raison d'état*, and classical realism more generally, were concerned with; that is, the role, if any, that morals and ethics occupy in international politics.

Realists are sceptical of the idea that universal moral principles exist and, therefore, warn state leaders against sacrificing their own self-interests in order to adhere to some indeterminate notion of 'ethical' conduct. Moreover, realists argue that the need for survival requires state leaders to distance themselves from traditional morality which attaches a positive value to caution, piety, and the greater good of humankind as a whole. Machiavelli argued

that these principles were positively harmful if adhered to by state leaders. It was imperative that state leaders learned a different kind of morality which accorded not to traditional Christian virtues but to political necessity and prudence. Proponents of *raison d'état* often speak of a dual moral standard: one moral standard for individual citizens living inside the state and a different standard for the state in its external relations with other states. Justification for the two moral standards stems from the fact that the condition of international politics often make it necessary for state leaders to act in a manner (for example, cheating, lying, killing) that would be entirely unacceptable for the individual. But before we reach the conclusion that Realism is completely immoral, it is important to add that proponents of *raison d'état* argue that the state itself represents a moral force, for it is the existence of the state that creates the possibility for an ethical political community to exist domestically. Thus preserving the life of the state and the ethical community it envelops becomes a moral duty of the statesperson.

Although the advanced student might be able to detect some subtle differences, it is fair to say that there is a significant degree of continuity between classical and modern realism. Indeed, the three core elements that we identify with Realism—statism, survival, and self-help—are present in the work of a classical realist such as Thucydides and a modern realist such as Hans J. Morgenthau. We argue that these 'three Ss' constitute the corners of the realist triangle. While we will expand on the meaning of these 'three Ss' later in the chapter, it is important to be clear at the outset what these terms signify.

Realism identifies the group as the fundamental unit of political analysis. During earlier times, such as when Thucydides and Machiavelli were writing, the basic unit was the *polis* or city-state, but since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) realists consider the sovereign state as the principle actor in international politics. This is often referred to as the state-centric assumption of Realism. Statism is the term given to the idea of the state as the legitimate representative of the collective will of the people. The legitimacy of the state is what enables it to exercise authority internally as manifest, for example, in the making and enforcement of law. Yet outside the boundaries of the state, realists argue that a condition of

anarchy exists. By anarchy what is most often meant is that international politics takes place in an arena that has no overarching central authority above the individual collection of sovereign states. Thus rather than necessarily denoting complete chaos and lawlessness, the concept of anarchy is used by realists to emphasize the point that the international realm is distinguished by the lack of a central authority. As we will see, realists draw a variety of conclusions about the effect that anarchy has on shaping the basic character of international politics.

Following from this, realists draw a sharp distinction between domestic and international politics. Thus while Hans J. Morgenthau argues that 'international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power,' he goes to great lengths to demonstrate the qualitatively different result this struggle has on international politics as compared to domestic politics (Morgenthau [1948]1955: 25). One major factor that realists argue sets international politics apart from domestic politics is that while the latter is able to constrain and channel the power-seeking ambitions of individuals in a less violent direction (for example, the pursuit of wealth), the former is much less able to do so. For realists, it is self-evident that the incidence of violence is greater at the international than the domestic level. A prominent explanation that realists provide for this difference in behaviour relates to the different organizational structure of domestic and international politics. Realists argue that the basic structure of international politics is one of anarchy in that each of the independent sovereign states consider themselves to be their own highest authority and do not recognize a higher power above them. Conversely, domestic politics is often described as a hierarchic structure in which different political actors stand in various relations of super- and subordination.

It is largely on the basis of how realists depict the international environment that they conclude that the first priority for state leaders is to ensure the survival of their state. Under anarchy, the survival of the state cannot be guaranteed. Realists correctly assume that all states wish to perpetuate their existence. Looking back at history, however, realists note that the actions of some states resulted in other states losing their existence (look at the results that Germany achieved at the beginning of World War II).

This is partly explained in light of the power differentials of states. Intuitively, states with more power stand a better chance of surviving than states with less power. Power is crucial to the realist lexicon and traditionally has been defined narrowly in military strategic terms. It is the ability to get what you want either through the threat or use of force. Yet irrespective of how much power a state may possess, the core national interest of all states must be survival. While states obviously have various interests, such as economic, environmental, and humanitarian, if their existence was to be jeopardized, then these other interests would not stand a chance of ever being realized. Like the pursuit of power, the promotion of the national interest is an iron law of necessity.

Self-help is the principle of action in an anarchical system where there is no global government. According to Realism, each state actor is responsible for ensuring their own well-being and survival. Unlike domestic politics where a range of institutions and mechanisms seek to ensure the welfare of the individual citizen, these are either non-existent or extremely weak in the international realm. Realists do not believe it is prudent for a state to entrust its safety and survival on another actor or international institution such as the League of Nations or the United Nations. For as Machiavelli recognized, today's friend can quickly become tomorrow's enemy. States, in short, should not depend on others for their own security. Moreover, realists once again turn to the historical record and note the unfortunate fate of Ethiopia under the League of Nations and Kuwait under the United Nations and conclude that states should ultimately rely on themselves for security.

You may at this point be asking what options are available to states to ensure their own security. Consistent with the principle of self-help, if a state feels threatened it should seek to augment its own power capabilities by engaging, for example, in a military arms build-up. Yet this may prove to be insufficient for a number of smaller states who feel threatened by a much larger state. This brings us to one of the crucial mechanisms that realists throughout the ages have considered to be essential to preserving the liberty of states—the balance of power. Although various meanings have been attributed to the concept of the balance of power, the most common definition holds that if the survival of a state or a number of weaker states is threatened by a hegemonic state or coalition of stronger states, they should join forces, establish a formal alliance, and seek to preserve their own independence by checking the power of the opposing side. The mechanism of the balance of power seeks to ensure an equilibrium of power in which case no one state or coalition of states is in a position to dominate all the others. The cold war competition between the East and West, as institutionalized through the formal alliance system of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), provides a prominent example of the balance of power mechanism in action.

Before continuing to engage with realist thought in more detail, let us remind ourselves that the story of the discipline of International Relations, like all texts, is open to multiple readings. Moreover, the final chapters have yet to be written. An interesting thought experiment is to ask whether Realism will have the last word. When 'the end of the world as we know it' is upon us, and the conclusion to the 'book' of International Relations is being hastily drafted, will it be written by a realist? Many contemporary theorists would argue that the discipline's centre of gravity is already shifting away from Realism towards a new kind of Liberalism, a theory more appropriate for the post-cold war era perhaps. Other more radical voices argue that what is needed is nothing less than a transformation in our political imagination, in terms of widening our sense of community beyond the confines of the sovereign state which realists (and some Liberal thinkers) take for granted (see Ch. 29). This is especially the case in light of the arguments that some proponents of globalization are making about the state being transcended by global economic forces. Although the chapter does not have the space to do justice to these critical arguments, the 'headlines' are presented in Box 7.3 in the hope that the reader will consult them in their original form.

By way of a response to the critics, it is worth reminding them that the death-knell of Realism has been sounded a number of times already, by the scientific approach in the 1960s and transnationalism in the 1970s, only to see the resurgence of a more

robust form of Realism in the late 1970s and 1980s (commonly termed 'neo-realism'). In this respect Realism shares with Conservatism (its ideological godfather) the recognition that a theory without the means to change is without the means of its own preservation. The question of Realism's resilience touches upon one of its central claims, namely, that it is the embodiment of laws of international politics which remain true across time (history) and space (geopolitics). This argument is made by a leading contemporary realist, Robert Gilpin, who cast doubt on 'whether or not twentieth-century students of international relations know anything that Thucydides and his fifth-century BC compatriots did not know about the behaviour of states' (1981: 227–8).

Thucydides was the historian of the Peloponnesian War, a conflict between two great powers in the ancient Greek world, Athens and Sparta. Thucydides' work has been admired by subsequent generations of realists for the insights he raised about many of the perennial issues of international politics. Thucydides' explanation of the underlying cause of the war—'the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta' (1.23)—is considered to be a classic example of the impact that the anarchical structure of international politics has on the behaviour of state actors. On this reading, Thucydides makes it clear that Sparta's national interest, like that of all states, was survival, and the changing distribution of power represented a direct threat to its existence. Sparta was, therefore, compelled by necessity to go to war in order to forestall being vanquished by Athens. Thucydides also makes it clear that Athens felt equally compelled to pursue power in order to preserve the empire it had acquired. The famous Athenian leader, Pericles, claimed to be acting on the basis of the most fundamental of human motivations: ambition, fear, and self-interest.

One of the significant episodes of the war between Athens and Sparta is known as the 'Melian dialogue' and represents a fascinating illustration of a number of key realist principles. Case Study 1 (Box 7.1) reconstructs the dialogue between the Athenian leaders who arrived on the island of Melos to assert their right of conquest over the islanders, and the response this provoked.

In short, what the Athenians are asserting over the Melians is the logic of power politics. Because of their vastly superior military force, they are able to present a fait accompli to the Melians: either submit peacefully or be exterminated. The Melians for their part try and 'buck' the logic of power politics, appealing in turn with arguments grounded in justice, God, and their allies the Spartans. As the dialogue makes clear, the Melians were forced to submit to the realist iron law that 'the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept'. Later realists would concur with Thucydides' suggestion that the logic of power politics has universal applicability. Instead of Athens and Melos, we could just as easily substitute, for example, Nazi Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1939, the Soviet Union and Hungary in 1956, or Indonesia and East Timor in 1975. In each case, the weaker state had to submit to the will of the stronger. Power trumps morality, and the threat or use of force triumphs over legal principles such as the right to independence (sovereignty). There are also alternative readings of Thucydides that highlight what happens when states act purely on the basis of self-interest without any consideration of moral and ethical principles. After all, Athens suffers epic defeat even while following the timeless tenets of Realism.

The question whether Realism does embody 'timeless truths' about politics will be returned to in the conclusion of the chapter. Could a scholar who understood the history of international conflict in the fifth century BC really apply the same conceptual tools to global politics at the end of the second millennium? In the following section we will begin to unravel Realism in order to reveal the way in which the tradition has evolved over the last twenty-five centuries. After considering the main tributaries which flow into the realist stream of thinking, the third section will attempt to disinter a 'core' of realist principles to which all realists could subscribe.

Key points

- Realism has been the dominant theory of world politics since the beginning of academic International Relations.

- Outside of the academy, Realism has a much longer history. Scepticism about the capacity of human reason to deliver moral progress resonates

Box 7.1 Case Study 1: The Melian dialogue—Realism and the preparation for war

ATHENIANS. Then we on our side will use no fine phrases saying, for example, that we have a right to our empire because we defeated the Persians ... And we ask you on your side not to imagine that you will influence us by saying that you, though a colony of Sparta, have not joined Sparta in the war, or that you have never done us any harm ... you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.

MELIANS. Then in our view (since you force us to leave justice out of account and to confine ourselves to self-interest) ... you should not destroy a principle that is to the general good of all men—namely, that in the case of all who fall into danger there should be such a thing as fair play and just dealing.

ATHENIANS. We do not want any trouble in bringing you into our empire, and we want you to be spared for the good both of yourselves and of ourselves.

MELIANS. And how could it be just as good for us to be the slaves as for you to be the masters?

ATHENIANS. You, by giving in, would save yourselves from disaster; we by not destroying you, would be able to profit from you.

MELIANS. So you do not agree to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side?

ATHENIANS. No ... if we were on friendly terms with you, our subjects would regard that as a sign of weakness in us, whereas your hatred is evidence of our power ... So that by conquering you we shall increase not only the size but the security of our empire.

MELIANS. But do you think there is no security for you in what we suggest? For here again, since you will not let us mention justice, but tell us to give in to your interests, we, too, must tell you what our interests are and, if yours and ours happen to coincide, we must try to persuade you of the fact. Is it not certain that you will make enemies of all states who are at present neutral, when they see what is happening here and naturally conclude that in course of time you will attack them too? ... Yet we know that in war, fortune sometimes makes the odds more level.

ATHENIANS. Hope, that comforter in danger!

MELIANS. We trust that the gods will give us fortune as good as yours, because we are standing for what is right against what is wrong; and as for what we lack in power, we trust that it will be made up for by our alliance with the Spartans, who are bound, if for no other reason, then for honour's sake, and because we are their kinsman, to come to our help.

ATHENIANS. So far as the favour of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have ... Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves, nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist forever among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. And therefore, so far as the gods are concerned, we see no good reason why we should fear to be at a disadvantage. But with regard to your views about Sparta and your confidence that she, out of a sense of honour, will come to your aid, we must say that we congratulate you on your simplicity but do not envy you your folly ... of all people we know the Spartans are most conspicuous for believing that what they like doing is honourable and what suits their interests is just.

MELIANS. But this is the very point where we can feel most sure. Their own self-interest will make them refuse to betray their own colonists, the Melians.

ATHENIANS. You seem to forget that if one follows one's self-interest one wants to be safe, whereas the path of justice and honour involves one in danger .... Do not be led astray by a false sense of honour. ... You, if you take the right view, will be careful to avoid this. And, when you are allowed to choose between war and safety, you will not be so insensitively arrogant as to make the wrong choice. You will see that there is nothing disgraceful in giving way to the greatest city in Hellas when she is offering you such reasonable terms—alliance on a tribute-paying basis and liberty to enjoy your own property. This is the safe rule—to stand up to one's equals, to behave with deference to one's superiors, and to treat one's inferiors with moderation.

MELIANS. Our decision, Athenians, is just the same as it was at first. We are not prepared to give up in a short moment the liberty which out city has enjoyed from its foundation for 700 years.

ATHENIANS. You seem to us ... to see uncertainties as realities, simply because you would like them to be so.

(This is an edited extract from Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin Classics, 1954), 360–5)

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through the work of classical political theorists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau.

In 'The Melian dialogue', one of the episodes of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides uses the words of the Athenians to highlight the realist view of a number of key concepts such as self-interest, alliances, balance of power, capabilities, and insecurity. The people of Melos respond in idealist verse, appealing to justice, fairness, luck, the gods, and in the final instance, to common interests.

- At the end of the millennium, Realism continues to attract academicians and inform policy-makers, although the passing of the cold war has seen a revival in the fortunes of Liberalism, and a variety of more critical approaches grouped under the banner of post-positivism.

One Realism, or many?

The intellectual exercise of articulating a unified theory of Realism has been criticized by writers who are both sympathetic and critical of the tradition (Doyle 1997; M. J. Smith 1986). In the words of a leading critic of Realism, 'there is no single tradition of political realism, but rather a knot of historically constituted tensions, contradictions and evasions' (Walker 1993: 106). Consistent with the argument that there is not one Realism, but many, is the attempt to delineate different types of Realism. The most simple distinction is a form of periodization that we introduced in the preceding section: classical realism (up to the twentieth century), modern realism (1939–79), and neo-realism (1979 onwards). These different periods do not, however, overcome the problem of diversity. For example, not all classical realists agree on the causes of war, or whether the balance of power is a natural state or one that must be created.

An alternative form of classification is thematic (a summary of the varieties of realism outlined below is contained in Table 7.1). One of the most convincing of these is R. B. J. Walker's distinction between historical realism and structural realism (1993: 108–22) which the following classification builds on.[3] Machiavelli is the leading classical exponent of historical realism in that he recognized the difficulties of devising universal maxims of state conduct that could be used at all times and places to ensure the survival of the state. Machiavelli recognized the flux of political life and appreciated the point that change is a continuous process. Therefore he warned state leaders always to hedge their bets and, rather than propounding timeless truths, Machiavelli offered what can be termed 'situation-bound knowledge' that always had to take the immediate context into consideration. E. H. Carr is the modern Machiavelli, advocating a foreign policy which recognizes the interplay of power and morality, consent and coercion, and force and appeasement. Carr concluded that the fundamental problem of international politics was how to foster peaceful change in the relations between satisfied and non-satisfied powers without the need to resort to war.

The structural realism lineage begins with Thucydides' representation of power politics as a law of human behaviour. The drive for power and the will to dominate are held to be fundamental aspects of human nature. The behaviour of the state as a self-seeking egoist is understood to be merely a reflection of the characteristics of the people that comprise the state. It is human nature that explains why international politics is necessarily power politics. This reduction of Realism to a condition of human nature is one which frequently reappears in the leading works of the realist canon, most famously in the work of the high priest of post-war Realism, Hans J. Morgenthau. It can usefully be thought of as a 'structural' theory—structural realism I—because human nature is viewed by realists as the determining structure, one which stands outside of history and cannot be transcended. Morgenthau notes, 'politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature' (Morgenthau

[1948]1955: 4). The important point for Morgenthau is, first, to recognize that these laws exist and second, to devise the most appropriate policies that are consistent with the basic fact that human beings are flawed creatures. For both Thucydides and Morgenthau, the essential continuity of the power-seeking behaviour of states is rooted in the biological drives of human beings.

The more frequent use of the term 'structural' in the literature—structural realism II[4]—is to denote the form of realist argument which attributes the cause of conflict to the anarchic structure of the international system. This form of structural realism is most often associated with Kenneth Waltz's landmark book, *Theory of International Politics* (1979). According to Waltz, anarchy prevents states from entering into co-operative agreements to end the state of war. The condition of anarchy—that is, the fact that there is no 'higher power' to ensure the peace among sovereign states—is often viewed as synonymous to a state of war. By the state of war, structural realists do not intend to convey the impression that large-scale war is a daily occurrence in international politics, but rather the possibility that a particular state may resort to force indicates that the outbreak of war is always a likely scenario in an anarchical environment. Thus, the structure of the system can drive states to war even if state leaders desire peace (Butterfield 1951: 21). Structural realists insist that the type of state, for example a democracy or totalitarian state, or the personality of the leader is less important in accounting for the phenomena of war than the fact that action takes place within the context of an anarchical realm. But as a number of scholars have pointed out, contemporary realists like Waltz who have tried to construct a realist theory without relying on an assumption about human nature often 'smuggle' into their idea of a 'system' behavioural assumptions about states as competitive and egoistic entities. Moreover, in the work of contemporary structural realists, these traits appear to be prior to the interactions of states as though they existed before the game of power politics began.

The fourth and final type of realism develops out of a reading of Thomas Hobbes. Although his great work *Leviathan* is often cited by realists for its graphically pessimistic portrayal of human nature, Hobbes can more usefully be deployed in support of liberal realism. His analogy between individuals in a state of nature and sovereigns in a state of war suggests a kind of permanent cold war where states are constantly living in fear of being attacked. But crucially, Hobbes believed that states are less vulnerable than individuals in the state of nature, and are therefore able to coexist with other sovereigns. As elementary rules of coexistence are formulated, such as the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, the anarchical system becomes an anarchical society, and Realism metamorphoses into a form of liberal realism. This liberal wing of realism has appealed in particular to British international relations theorists who have, as John Vincent put it, 'flattered Hobbes by imitating him' (1981: 96–101).[5]

Given the varieties of Realism that exist, it is hardly surprising that the overall coherence of Realism as a tradition of inquiry into international relations has been questioned (Forde 1992: 62). The answer to the question of 'coherence' is, of course, contingent upon how strict the criteria are for judging the continuities which underpin a particular theory. Here it is perhaps a mistake to understand traditions as a single stream of thought, handed down in a neatly wrapped package from one generation of realists to another. Instead it is preferable to think of living traditions like Realism as the embodiment of both continuities and conflicts. For this reason it is important for students to read realists in their historical and political contexts, to try and understand the world they were speaking to and the forces they were reacting against.

While recognizing the danger of imposing a 'mythology of coherence' (Skinner 1988: 39) on the various theorists and practitioners identified with Realism, there are good reasons for attempting to identify a shared core of propositions which all realists subscribe to (see section below, 'The essential Realism'). In the first instance, there is virtue in simplicity; complex ideas can be filtered, leaving a residual substance which may not conform to any one of the ingredients but is nevertheless a virtual representation of all of them. A second reason for attempting to arrive at a composite Realism is that, despite the different strands running through the tradition, there is a sense in which all realists share a common set of propositions. These will be considered in the third section of this chapter.

Table 7.1 A taxonomy of realisms

Type of Realism	Key thinkers (classical and modern)	Key texts	'Big idea'
Structural realism I (Human Nature)	Thucydides (c.430–400 BC)	The Peloponnesian War	International politics is driven by an endless struggle for power which has its roots in human nature. Justice, law, and society have either no place or are circumscribed.
Historical or practical realism	Morgenthau (1948)	Politics Among Nations	Political realism recognizes that principles are subordinated to policies; the ultimate skill of the state leader is to accept, and adapt to, the changing power political configurations in world politics.
	Machiavelli (1532)	The Prince	
	Carr (1939)	The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939	
Structural realism II (international system)	Rousseau (c.1750)	The State of War	It is not human nature, but the anarchical system which fosters fear, jealousy, suspicion, and insecurity. Conflict can emerge even if the actors have benign intent towards each other.
	Waltz (1979)	Theory of International Politics	
Liberal realism	Hobbes (1651)	Leviathan	The international anarchy can be cushioned by states who have the capability to deter other states from aggression, and who are able to construct elementary rules for their coexistence.
	Bull (1977)	The Anarchical Society	

Key points

- There is a lack of consensus in the literature as to whether we can meaningfully speak about Realism as a single coherent theory.

- There are good reasons for delineating different types of Realism. The most important cleavage is between those who see Realism as a licence to take any course of action necessary to ensure political survival (historical realists) and those who see it as a permanent condition of conflict or the preparation for future conflicts (structural realists).

- Structural realism divides into two wings: those writers who emphasize human nature as the structure (structural realism I) and those who believe that anarchy is the structure which shapes and shoves the behaviour of states (structural realism II).

- At the margins of Realism we find a form of liberal realism which rejects the pessimistic picture of historical and structural realists, believing that the state of war can be mitigated by the management of power by the leading states in the system and the development of practices such as diplomacy and customary international law.

- The question whether it is legitimate to speak of a coherent tradition of political realism touches upon an important debate conducted by historians of ideas. Most classical realists did not consider themselves to be adherents of a particular tradition, for this reason Realism, like all other traditions, is something of an invention.

- Once we admit to a variety of realisms, we are in danger of exaggerating the particular characteristics of each thinker and the context within which they wrote, at a cost of gleaning a better understanding of Realism as a whole.

The essential Realism

The previous paragraphs have argued that Realism is a theoretical broad church, embracing a variety of authors and texts. Despite the numerous denominations, we argue that all realists subscribe to the following 'three Ss': statism, survival, self-help.[6] Each of these elements is considered in more detail in the subsections below.

Statism

For realists, the state is the main actor and sovereignty is its distinguishing trait. The meaning of the sovereign state is inextricably bound up with the use of force. In terms of its internal dimension, to illustrate this relationship between violence and the state we need to look no further than Max Weber's famous definition of the state as 'the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory'.[7] Within this territorial space, sovereignty means that the state has supreme authority to make and enforce laws. This is the basis of the unwritten contract between individuals and the state. According to Hobbes, for example, we trade our liberty in return for a guarantee of security. Once security has been established, civil society can begin. But in the absence of security, there can be no art, no culture, no society. All these finer aspects of social life are secondary in importance. The first move, then, for the realist is to organize power domestically. In this respect, 'every state is fundamentally a Machstaat' or power state (Donelan 1990: 25). Only after power has been organized, can community begin.

Realist international theory appears to operate according to the assumption that, domestically, the problem of order and security is solved. The presence of a sovereign authority domestically implies that individuals need not worry about their own security, since this is provided for them in the form of a system of law, police protection, prisons, and other coercive measures. This allows members of the political community living 'inside' the state to pursue the good life. However, on the 'outside', in the relations among independent sovereign states, insecurities,

dangers, and threats to the very existence of the state loom large. Realists largely explain this on the basis that the very condition for order and security, namely, the existence of a sovereign—is missing from the international realm. Yet it is worthwhile to evaluate critically the assumptions that are being made here. Is it really the case that you always feel secure inside your own state? Is a central authority a prerequisite for peace and order? Is the inside/outside distinction that realists draw between peace and security on the one hand, and violence and insecurity on the other hand defensible?

Realists claim that in anarchy, states compete with other states for security, markets, influence, and so on. And the nature of the competition is often viewed in zero-sum terms; in other words, more for one actor means less for another. This competitive logic of power politics makes agreement on universal principles difficult, apart from the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign states. This international legal aspect of sovereignty functions as a 'no trespass sign' placed on the border between states. But even this principle, designed to facilitate coexistence, is suspended by realists who argue that in practice non-intervention does not apply in relations between great powers and their 'near abroad'.

Given that the first move of the state is to organize power domestically, and the second is to accumulate power internationally, it is self-evidently important to consider in more depth what realists mean by their ubiquitous fusion of politics with power. It is one thing to say that international politics is a struggle for power, but this merely begs the question of what realists mean by power. Morgenthau offers the following definition of power: 'man's control over the minds and actions of other men' ([1948]1955: 26). There are two important points that realists make about the elusive concept of power. First, power is a relational concept; one does not exercise power in a vacuum, but in relation to another entity. Second, power is a relative concept; calculations need to be made not only about one's own power capabilities, but about the power that other

state actors possess. Yet the task of accurately assessing the power of states is infinitely complex, and often is reduced to counting the number of troops, tanks, aircraft, and naval ships a country possesses in the belief that this translates in the ability to get other actors to do something they would not otherwise do. There have been, however, a number of criticisms made of classical and modern Realism's over-reliance on this one-dimensional view of power.

There are two important exceptions to this tendency. First, the more liberal wing of realism has long noted the importance of more subtle understanding of power as prestige; in other words, the ability to get what you want without either the threat or the use of force but through diplomatic influence or authority. Second, E. H. Carr grafted economic and ideological dimensions onto the traditional realist equation of power 'equals' military force. Despite these revisions, Realism has been purchased at a discount precisely because its currency, power, has remained under-theorized and inconsistently used. Simply by asserting that states seek power provides no answer to crucial questions. Why do states struggle for power? Why is the accumulation of power, as Morgenthau argued, 'always the immediate aim'? Surely power is a means to an end rather than an end in itself?

Contemporary structural realists have in recent years sought to bring more conceptual clarity to bear on the meaning of power in the realist discourse. Kenneth Waltz tries to overcome the problem by shifting the focus from power to 'capabilities'. He suggests that capabilities can be ranked according to their strength in the following areas: 'size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence' (1979: 131). The difficulty here is that resource strength does not always lead to military victory. For example, in the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, the distribution of resources clearly favoured the Arab coalition and yet the supposedly weaker side annihilated its enemies' forces and seized their territory. The definition of power as capabilities is even less successful at explaining the relative economic success of Japan over China. A more sophisticated understanding of power would focus on the ability of a state to control

or influence its environment in situations that are not necessarily conflictual.

An additional weakness with the realist treatment of power concerns its exclusive focus upon state power. For realists, states are the only actors that really 'count'. Transnational corporations, international organizations, and religious denominations, like all other ideologies, rise and fall but the state is the one permanent feature in the landscape of modern global politics. Moreover, it is not clear that these non-state actors are autonomous from state power, whether this be Italy in the case of the papacy or the US in the case of corporations like Microsoft. The extent to which non-state actors bear the imprint of a statist identity is further endorsed by the fact that these actors have to make their way in an international system whose rules are made by states. There is no better example of this than the importance of American hegemonic power 'underwriting' the Bretton Woods trading system which has set the framework for international economic relations in the post-1945 period. The motivation for this was not altruism on the part of the US but the rational calculation that it had more to gain from managing the international system than to lose by refusing to exercise leadership. Moreover, realists argue that an open, free-trade economic system, such as what was established at Bretton Woods, depends on the existence of a hegemon who is willing to shoulder the financial burdens of managing the system. This realist argument, popularly known as hegemonic stability theory, maintains that international economic order is dependent on the existence of a dominant state.

Survival

The second principle which unites most realists of all persuasions is the assertion that, in international politics, the pre-eminent goal is survival. Although there is an ambiguity in the works of the realists as to whether the accumulation of power is an end in itself, one would think that there is no dissenting from the argument that the ultimate concern of states is for security. Survival is held to be a precondition for attaining all other goals, whether these involve conquest or merely independence. According

to Waltz, 'beyond the survival motive, the aims of states may be endlessly varied' (1979: 91). Yet a recent controversy among realists has arisen over the question of whether states are in fact principally security or power maximizers. This controversy pits *defensive* against *offensive* realists, and has a number of significant implications for how we view the prospects of international security and co-operation. Defensive realists such as Waltz and Joseph Grieco (1997) argue that states have security as their principal interest and therefore only seek the requisite amount of power to ensure their own survival. According to this view, states are profoundly defensive actors and will not seek to gain greater amounts of power if that means jeopardizing their own security. Offensive realism, as put forth by John Mearsheimer (1994/5), argues that the ultimate goal of all states is to achieve a hegemonic position in the international system. States, according to this view, always desire more power and are willing, if the opportunity arises, to alter the existing distribution of power even if such an action may jeopardize their own security. In terms of survival, defensive realists hold that the existence of status quo powers lessens the competition for power while offensive realists argue that the competition is always keen because revisionist states and aspiring hegemons are always willing to take risks with the aim of improving their position in the international system.

Niccolo Machiavelli tried to make a 'science' out of his reflections on the art of survival. His short and engaging book, *The Prince*, was written with the explicit intention of codifying a set of maxims which will enable leaders to maintain their hold on power. Machiavelli derived these maxims from his experience as a diplomat and his studies of ancient history. For instance, he was full of admiration for the Roman empire which annexed all potential enemies through conquest and imperial domination. Ergo, the lesson that Princes or Sovereigns must be prepared to break their promises if it is in their interests, and to conquer neighbouring states before they (inevitably) attack you. There are a number of ethical and practical difficulties associated with Machiavelli's recommendations, particularly when relating these to contemporary international politics. Indeed, it is the perceived moral bankruptcy of Realism which has provoked a number of the most

influential criticisms of the theory, summarized in Box 7.3.

In important respects, we find two related Machiavellian themes recurring in the writings of modern realists, both of which derive from the idea that the realm of international politics requires different moral and political rules than those which apply in domestic politics. The task of understanding the real nature of international politics, and the need to protect the state at all costs (even if this may mean the sacrifice of one's own citizens) places a heavy burden on the shoulders of state leaders. In the words of Henry Kissinger, the academic realist who became Secretary of State during the Nixon Presidency, 'a nation's survival is its first and ultimate responsibility; it cannot be compromised or put to risk'.(1977: 204). Their guide must be an ethic of responsibility; the careful weighing up of consequences; the realization that individual acts of an immoral kind might have to be taken for the greater good. By way of an example, think of the ways in which governments frequently suspend the legal and political rights of 'suspected terrorists' in view of the threat they pose to 'national security'. A realist would argue that letting a suspected terrorist out of prison because there is insufficient evidence for prosecution would be an irresponsible act which might jeopardize the lives of innocent civilians. An ethic of responsibility is frequently used as a justification for breaking the laws of war, as in the case of the United States decision to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The principle difficulty with the realist formulation of an 'ethics of responsibility' is that, whilst instructing leaders to consider the consequences of their actions, it does not provide a guide to how state leaders should weigh the consequences (M. J. Smith 1986: 51).

Not only does Realism provide an alternative moral code for state leaders, it suggests a wider objection to the whole enterprise of bringing ethics into international politics. Starting from the assumption that each state has its own particular values and beliefs, realists argue that the state is the supreme good and there can be no community beyond borders. Without a common culture, and common institutions, the idea of an 'international community', so frequently articulated by journalists, is seriously premature. E. H. Carr turned scepticism

about moral universals into a 'critical weapon' which he wielded in order to reveal how the supposedly universal principles adumbrated by the Great Powers (such as the virtue of free trade or self-determination) were really 'unconscious reflexions of national policy' (Carr 1946: 87). This moral relativism has generated a substantial body of criticism, particularly from liberal theorists: if all values are relative, how can we judge the actions of state-leaders? Are there not some policies which are wrong irrespective of which states commit them, such as torture or the denial of civil rights? Whilst the intuitive answer to these questions is 'yes', the argument gets more murky when other states with non-Western cultures argue that what we call 'torture' they call a 'rite of passage' (as in the case of female genital mutilation in certain African states). Moreover, many developing states argue that civil rights undermine social cohesion by privileging the individual's rights over the collective good. A realist would therefore see the pursuit of human rights in foreign policy as the imposition of one state's moral principles on another (Morgenthau 1978: 4).

Self-help

Kenneth Waltz's path-breaking work *Theory of International Politics* brought to the realist tradition a deeper understanding of the international system within which states coexist. Unlike many other realists, Waltz argued that international politics was not unique because of the regularity of war and conflict, since this was as familiar in domestic politics. The key difference between domestic and international orders lies in their structure. In the domestic polity, citizens do not have to defend themselves. In the international system, there is no higher authority to prevent and counter the use of force. Security can therefore only be realized through self-help. In an anarchic structure, 'self-help is necessarily the principle of action' (Waltz 1979: 111). But in the course of providing for one's own security, the state in question will automatically be fuelling the insecurity of other states.

The term given to this spiral of insecurity is the security dilemma.[8] According to Wheeler and Booth, security dilemmas exist 'when the military

preparations of one state create an unresolvable uncertainty in the mind of another as to whether those preparations are for "defensive" purposes only (to enhance its security in an uncertain world) or whether they are for offensive purposes (to change the status quo to its advantage)' (1992: 30). This scenario suggests that one state's quest for security is often another state's source of insecurity. States find it very difficult to trust one another and often view the intentions of others in a negative light. Thus the military preparations of one state are likely to be matched by neighbouring states. The irony is that at the end of the day, states often feel no more secure than before they undertook measures to enhance their own security.

Is there any escape from the security dilemma? There is a divergence in the realist camp between structural realists who believe the security dilemma to be a perennial condition of international politics, and historical realists who believe that, even in a self-help system, the dilemma can be mitigated. The principle mechanism by which it may be mitigated is through the operation of the balance of power. Maintaining a balance of power therefore became a central objective in the foreign policies of the Great Powers; this idea of a contrived balance is well illustrated by the British foreign office memorandum quoted in Box 7.2.

In a self-help system, structural realists argue that the balance of power will emerge even in the absence of a conscious policy to maintain the balance (i.e. prudent statecraft). Waltz argues that balances of power result irrespective of the intentions of any particular state. In an anarchical system populated by states who seek to perpetuate themselves, alliances will be formed that seek to check and balance the power against threatening states. A fortuitous balance will be established through the interactions of states in the same way that an equilibrium is established between firms and consumers in a free economic market (according to classical liberal economic theory). Liberal realists are more likely to emphasize the crucial role state leaders and diplomats play in maintaining the balance of power. In other words, the balance of power is not natural or inevitable, it must be constructed.

All varieties of Realism are united in the view that the balance of power is not a stable condition.

Box 7.2 British foreign policy and the balance of power

History shows that the danger threatening the independence of this or that nation has generally arisen, at least in part, out of the momentary predominance of a neighbouring State at once militarily powerful, economically efficient, and ambitious to extend its frontiers or spread its influence . . . The only check on the abuse of political predominance derived from such a position has always consisted in the opposition of an equally formidable rival, or a combination of several countries forming leagues of defence. The equilibrium established by such a grouping of forces is technically known as the balance of power, and it has become almost an historical truism to identify England's secular policy with the maintenance of this balance by throwing her weight now in this scale and now in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest single State or group at a given time.

Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany, 1 January 1907 (Viotti and Kauppi 1993: 50).

Whether it is the contrived balance of the Concert of Europe in the early nineteenth century, or the more fortuitous balance of the cold war, balances of power are broken—either through war or peaceful change—and new balances emerge. What the perennial collapsing of the balance of power demonstrates is that states are at best able to mitigate the worst consequences of the security dilemma but are not able to escape it. The reason for this terminal condition is the absence of trust in international relations. *lack of trust*

Historically realists have illustrated the lack of trust among states by reference to the parable of the 'stag hunt'. In *Man, the State and War*, Kenneth Waltz revisits Rousseau's parable:

Assume that five men who have acquired a rudimentary ability to speak and to understand each other happen to come together at a time when all of them suffer from hunger. The hunger of each will be satisfied by the fifth part of a stag, so they 'agree' to co-operate in a project to trap one. But also the hunger of any one of them will be satisfied by a hare, so,

as a hare comes within reach, one of them grabs it. The defector obtains the means of satisfying his hunger but in doing so permits the stag to escape. His immediate interest prevails over consideration for his fellows. (1959: 167–8)

Waltz argues that the metaphor of the stag hunt provides not only a justification for the establishment of government, but a basis for understanding the problem of co-ordinating the interests of the individual versus the interests of the common good, and the pay-off between short-term interests and long-term interests. In the self-help system of international politics, the logic of self-interest mitigates against the provision of collective goods such as 'security' or 'free trade'. In the case of the latter, according to the theory of comparative advantage, all states would be wealthier in a world that allowed freedom of goods and services across borders. But individual states, or groups of states like the European Union, can increase their wealth by pursuing protectionist policies providing other states do not respond in kind. Of course the logical outcome is for the remaining states to become protectionist, international trade collapses, and a world recession reduces the wealth of each state.

The contemporary liberal solution to this problem of collective action in self-help systems is through the construction of regimes (see Ch. 14). In other words, by establishing patterns of rules, norms and procedures, such as those embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO), states are likely to be more confident that other states will comply with the rules and that defectors will be punished. Contemporary structural realists agree with liberals that regimes can facilitate co-operation under certain circumstances, although realists believe that in a self-help system co-operation is 'harder to achieve, more difficult to maintain, and more dependent on state power' (Grieco, in Baldwin 1993: 302). One reason for this is that structural realists argue that states are more concerned about relative than absolute gains. Thus the question is not whether all will be better off through co-operation, but rather who will likely gain more than another. It is because of this concern with relative gains issues that realists argue that co-operation is difficult to achieve in a self-help system (see Ch. 9).

A more thoroughgoing challenge to the way in which realists have set up the problem of collective

action in a self-help system comes from constructivism (see Ch. 11).[9] Although this is a complex argument, the key move in the critique is to argue that anarchy need not imply a self-help system. Historically, anarchy has accommodated varieties of inter-state practices. In the eighteenth century, philosophers and lawyers portrayed the European states-system as a commonwealth, a family of nations, with common laws and customs. In the twentieth century, the decentralized international system has witnessed a diverse pattern of interactions, from a literal state of war to brief periods of collective security to examples of regional integration. Only the first of these three conditions could be described in terms of self-help. As Alexander Wendt puts it: 'Self-help presupposes self-interest; it does not explain it. Anarchy is what states make of it' (1994: 388).

Key points

- Statism is the centrepiece of Realism. This involves two claims. First, for the theorist, the state is the pre-eminent actor and all other actors in world politics are of lesser significance. Second, state 'sovereignty' signifies the existence of an independent political community, one which has juridical authority over its territory.

- Key criticism: Statism is flawed both on empirical (challenges to state power from 'above' and 'below') and normative grounds (the inability of sovereign states to respond to collective global

problems such as famine, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses).

- Survival: The primary objective of all states is survival; this is the supreme national interest to which all political leaders must adhere. All other goals such as economic prosperity are secondary (or 'low politics'). In order to preserve the security of their state, leaders must adopt an ethical code which judges actions according to the outcome rather than in terms of a judgement about whether the individual act is right or wrong. If there are any moral universals for political realists, these can only be concretized in particular communities.

- Key criticism: Are there no limits to what actions a state can take in the name of necessity?

- Self-help: No other state can be relied upon to guarantee your survival. In international politics, the structure of the system does not permit friendship, trust, and honour; only a perennial condition of uncertainty generated by the absence of a global government. Coexistence is achieved through the maintenance of the balance of power, and limited co-operation is possible in interactions where the realist state stands to gain more than other states.

- Key criticism: Self-help is not an inevitable consequence of the absence of a world government; self-help is the game which states have chosen to play. Moreover, there are historical and contemporary examples where states have preferred collective security systems, or forms of regional integration, in preference to self-help.

Conclusion: Realism and the globalization of world politics

The chapter opened by considering the often repeated realist claim that the pattern of international politics—wars interrupted for periods characterized by the preparation for future wars—have remained constant over the preceding twenty-five centuries. Realists have consistently held that the continuities

in international relations are more important than the changes, but many find this to be problematic in the present age of globalization. In the concluding paragraphs below, we will briefly evaluate whether Realism can speak to our world, or has become, as its critics suggest, an anachronistic theory.

Box 7.3 What the critics say

R. ASHLEY: Structural realists portray the structure of the international system as though there is only one structure (that of power) and its existence is independent of states (rather than constructed by them). For this reason, contemporary structural realism is a static, conservative theory (1984).

C. BEITZ: The analogy between individuals in a state of nature and states in international anarchy is misplaced for four reasons. States are not the only actors; the power of states is massively unequal; states are not independent of each other; patterns of co-operation exist (even if motivated by self-interest) despite the absence of a global government capable of enforcing rule (1979).

K. BOOTH: Realism cannot speak to our world. Survival for the majority of individuals in global politics is threatened not by armies of 'foreign' states but more often by their own governments, or more broadly, structures of global capitalism which produce and reproduce the daily round of 'human wrongs' such as malnutrition, death from preventable diseases, slavery, prostitution, and exploitation (1995b).

C. BROWN: The strongest argument against Realism's moral scepticism is that states employ a moral language of rights and duties in their relations with each other (1992).

J. BURTON: Interactions of states is only one of many levels of interaction in world society. Rather than an image of states as billiard balls impacting on each other at random, Burton argues we should think about international relations as a 'cobweb model' of interactions and linkages between multiple actors (firms, individuals, groups, etc.) (1990).

R. COX: Realism is problem-solving theory. It accepts the prevailing order, and seeks only to isolate aspects of the system in order to understand how it works. The idea of theory serving an emancipatory purpose—i.e. contemplating alternative world orders—is not in the structural realist's vocabulary (1986).

F. HALLIDAY: The realist conception of the state in international politics (where states are equal, they are in control of their territory, they coincide with nations, and represent their peoples) is very unrealistic. A more adequate interpretation of the state is provided by sociology, which makes an analytical distinction between the state and society, the state and government, and the state and nation (1994).

M. HOLLIS and S. SMITH: Realism assumes that the methods of the natural sciences can be employed to explain the social world (of which international relations is

part). Realism can therefore be equated with a form of positivism which seeks to uncover causal laws that can both explain and predict the occurrence of events in world politics (1990).

F. KRATOCHWIL: Contrary to the expectations of contemporary structural realism, the end of the cold war was not brought about by any radical shift in the distribution of power in the international system, and moreover, this shift occurred without a major war (1993).

A. LINKLATER: We must go beyond the structural realist emphasis upon constraints, and the liberal realist predilection for order, in order to develop an emancipatory form of theory which seeks to deepen the sense of solidarity, and widen the bonds of community in global politics (1990b).

V. SPIKE PETERSON: The realist emphasis upon national security is contradictory for women, since it masks over 'women's systemic insecurity'. Taking feminism seriously requires a radical rethink of the way in which security is framed by a form of sovereignty which legitimizes violence against women and gendered divisions of resources and identities (1992).

J. ROSENBERG: Realism is a conservative ideology. Fundamental to this conservatism is the autonomy realists accord to the international realm. 'The borders and landscapes of this environment are set and policed by the twin concepts of sovereignty and anarchy' (1994: 30).

M. J. SMITH: Despite the argument that values should not impact objective policy formulation, Realism too often appears as nothing more than the (traditional) values and beliefs of the author in question, leaving the suspicion that it is conservative intuitionism masquerading as an international political theory (1986).

C. SYLVESTER: From Machiavelli to the early twenty-first century, the qualities 'men' have ascribed to 'women'—such as irrationality, intuition, temptation—have been regarded as a danger to international affairs. For this reason, historical realists argue that statecraft should remain 'mancraft' (1994).

J. VASQUEZ: A statistical analysis of International Relations literature in the 1950s and 1960s underscores the dominance of the realist paradigm in terms of the overwhelming reliance on the core assumptions of Realism. However, although Realism dominated the field, it did not adequately explain international politics from a social science perspective. For example, of 7,044 realist hypotheses tested in the field, only 157 of these fail to be falsified (1998: 149).

It has often been argued that the end of the cold war dealt a fatal blow for Realism. Despite its supporters' faith in the capacity of Realism to predict changes in the international system, most contemporary structural realists predicted the continuity of a stable bipolar (or two superpowers) system well into the twenty-first century (Waltz 1979: 210). It would therefore appear that the peaceful conclusion of the cold war, which represents one of the most significant changes in the contemporary international system, raises some serious problems for Realism. Critics of structural realism were right in objecting to its inability to theorize changes in the international system, and some questioned whether the reign of Realism might not be coming to an end. (Although, in fairness to Realism, none of the other paradigms of international politics managed to predict the disintegration of the cold war system with the clarity of many Central and East European intellectuals and dissidents.) Yet various realists have provided explanations to account for the end of the cold war and do not find the events that culminated in the collapse of the Soviet Union to represent a major anomaly for realism, see Case Study 2 (Box 7.4).

Moreover, the understandable idealism which greeted the end of the Soviet empire has become more muted in the last few years as the world has witnessed some of the most horrific conflicts of the twentieth century. In the former Yugoslavia we have seen war crimes committed by all of the protagonists, crimes that Europe thought had been banished by the defeat of Nazism. Whilst it would be too strong to claim that the Balkan war was a realist war (because of the multiplicity of complex causes) its origins in the fear engendered by the collapse of the Yugoslav state allied to the contagion of a form of nationalism defined by the fiction of a pure ethnic identity, bear a resemblance to an atavistic realism of blood and belonging. War in Africa, rising tensions between India and Pakistan, conflict in the Middle East, and concern about the intentions of China continue to confirm the relevance of Realism. There seems little doubt that realist ideas will be drawn upon in the future by state leaders who believe the use of force is the only instrument left to insure their survival.

This is not to suggest that Realism is only useful as

Box 7.4 Case study 2: After the cold war—Realism's eternal return?

• Leading non-realist theorists have argued that the end of the cold war represents a failure for Realism in general, and neo- or structural realism in particular. Why? First, Waltz's 1979 book *Theory of International Politics* aligns structural realism with positivism, and the objective of all positivist theories is to predict. Despite this clear scientific objective, most realists were unwilling to specify when and how the international system was going to change although Waltz believed it was likely to last well into the twenty-first century. This in itself suggests that Realism is a conservative theory, privileging an explanation of continuity over theorizing alternative future orders.

• While realists could claim that all branches of IR theory were caught out by the collapse of bipolarity at the end of the 1980s, there is a second and more weighty criticism of Realism and that concerns its failure to *explain* the end of the cold war. The most common realist reply is to argue that a state in decline will try to reverse this process by curtailing its external commitments. In other words, the Soviet Union retreated, and in this sense, was defeated. The problem here is that, when they did make general predictions, contemporary realists expected the opposite.

• Again, we find that Realism lends itself to any number of possible consequences. Realism can lend itself to an expansionist foreign policy or to appeasement; to a retreat from empire or to expanding the frontier for security reasons. The ambiguity of this point is put very succinctly by John Vazquez (in his excellent critique of neo-realism and the end of the cold war): 'The great virtue of realism is that it can explain almost any foreign policy event. Its great defect is that it tends to do this after the fact, rather than before' (Vazquez, 1998: 324).

a guide to understanding the origins and settlement of wars. It will continue to serve as a critical weapon for revealing the interplay of national interests beneath the rhetoric of universalist sentiments. There is no more powerful example of this than Realism's potential to deconstruct a Marxist or a Liberal progressivist view of history which sees the gradual triumphing of European ideas and values

Box 7.5 Key concepts in realist thought

anarchy	Does not imply chaos, but the absence of political authority.	inter-national system	A set of interrelated parts connected to form a whole. Systems have defining principles such as hierarchy (in domestic politics and anarchy (in international politics).
anarchic system	The 'ordering principle' of international politics, and that which defines its structure.		
balance of power	Refers to an equilibrium between states; historical realists regard it as the product of diplomacy (contrived balance) whereas structural realists regard the system as having a tendency towards a natural equilibrium (fortuitous balance).	national interest	Invoked by realists and state leaders to signify that which is most important to the state—survival being at the top of the list.
capabilities	Population and size of territory, resources, economic strength, military capability, and competence (Waltz 1979:131)	power	The ability to control outcomes e.g. state A is able to get state B to act in a way which maximizes the interests of A.
dual moral standards	The idea that there are two principles or standards of right and wrong: one for the individual citizen and different one for the state.	self-help	In an anarchical environment, states cannot assume other states will come to their defence even if they are allies.
		sovereignty	The state has supreme authority domestically and independence internationally
ethic of responsibility	For historical realists, an ethic of responsibility is the limits of ethics in international politics; it involves the weighing up of consequences and the realization that positive outcomes may result from amoral actions.	state	A legal territorial entity composed of a stable population and a government; it possesses a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; its sovereignty is recognized by other states in the international system.
idealism	Holds that ideas have important causal effect on events in international politics, and that ideas can change. Referred to by realists as utopianism since it underestimates the logic of power politics and the constraints this imposes upon political action.	statism	The ideology which supports the organization of humankind into particular communities; the values and beliefs of that community are protected and sustained by the state.
inter-dependence	A condition where the actions of one state impact upon other states (can be strategic interdependence or economic). Realists equate interdependence with vulnerability.	state of war	The conditions (often described by classical realists) where there is no actual conflict, but a permanent cold war that could become a 'hot' war at any time.
hegemony	The influence a great power is able to establish on other states in the system; extent of influence ranges from leadership to dominance.	structure	In the philosophy of the social sciences a structure is something which exists independently of the actor (e.g. social class) but is an important determinant in the nature of the action (e.g. revolution). For contemporary structural realists, the number of great powers in the international system constitutes the structure.
hegemonic stability theory	A realist based explanation for co-operation that argues that a dominant state is required to ensure a liberal, free-trade international political economy.	survival	The first priority for state leaders, emphasized by historical realists such as Machiavelli, Meinecke, and Weber.

throughout the world. A realist has no problem understanding aspects of the globalization of world politics—indeed structural realists could claim to have theorized more completely the nature of the international system than any other paradigm on offer. What is interesting about a realist theory of globalization is the acceptance of the militarization of the international system, and the patterns of political control and domination which extend beyond borders (such as hegemonic control or spheres of influence), but a concomitant rejection of the idea that globalization is accompanied by a deepening sense of community. From Rousseau to Waltz, realists have argued that interdependence brought about through intimate contact with modernity is as likely to breed 'mutual vulnerability' as peace and prosperity. And while questioning the extent to which the world has become 'interdependent', realists insist that the state is not going to be eclipsed by global forces operating either below or above the nation-state.

There are good reasons for thinking that the twenty-first century will be a realist century. The Western sense of immortality, fuelled by the Enlightenment discoveries of reason and democracy, was dealt a fatal blow by the Holocaust. Despite the efforts of federalists to rekindle the idealist flame, Europe continues to be divided by interests and not united by a common good. Outside of Europe and North America, many of the assumptions which underpinned the post-war international order, particularly those associated with human rights, are increasingly being seen as nothing more than a Western idea backed by economic dollars and military 'divisions'. As the axis of world politics shifts to the Asia-Pacific region, this model of democratic individualism which the liberal West has tried to export to the rest of the world is being revealed as culturally contingent and economically retarded. This comes as no surprise to realists who understand that words are weapons and that internationalist ideas are the continuation of statism by other means. Here we find an alliance between Realism and many non-Western states' leaders who recognize that values are shared within particular communities and not between them, that knowledge is contingent and not grounded in universal reason, that global cultures are fragmented and contested. Rather than transforming global politics in its own image, as liberalism has sought to do in this century, the West may need to become more realist in order to survive the next.

QUESTIONS

1 How does the Melian dialogue represent key concepts such as self-interest, the balance of power, alliances, capabilities, empires and justice?

2 Do you think there is one Realism, or many?

3 Do you know more about international relations than an Athenian student during The Peloponnesian War?

4 Is the practice of international politics realist? How does Realism inform state practice? Through what channels or processes does it shape foreign policy?

5 Do realists confuse a description of war and conflict, for an explanation of why it occurs?

6 How can the security dilemma be escaped or mitigated?

7 Is Realism any more than the ideology of powerful, satisfied states?

8 How far do the critics of Realism overlook the extent to which the theory is grounded in an ethical defence of the state?

9 How would realists try to explain the continuing instability in the Balkans? Do you find their arguments convincing?

10 Will the West have to learn to be more realist, and not less, if its civilization is to survive in the twenty-first century?

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The most comprehensive book on twentieth-century Realism is Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). For an effective single chapter survey, particularly on structural realism, see Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), chapter 5. The Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1993) textbook has an extensive treatment of Realism in chapter 2, including important excerpts from the classical precursors.

The best single work on historical realism is N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1946) is a hugely important and thought-provoking work which brings historical Realism into the twentieth century, see especially chapters 5 and 6. The bible for liberal realism is Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977). Structural realism I, with its emphasis upon laws of human nature, is exemplified in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1978), chapter 1. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979) is the exemplar for structural Realism II, see in particular, chapters 1 and 6. Alongside this work, the student should consult Robert Keohane, *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). This collection of essays includes key chapters by Waltz, an interesting defence of Realism by Robert Gilpin, and powerful critiques by Richard Ashley, Robert Cox, and J. G. Ruggie. A more recent collection which takes the debate further is David A. Baldwin, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For the more penetrating constructivist challenge to Realism, see A. Wendt in *International Organization*, 46:2 (1992), 395–421; and *American Political Science Review*, 88:2 (1994), 384–96.

NOTES

1. Realism, *realpolitik*, and *raison d'état* are broadly interchangeable. In this chapter, Realism with an upper case 'R' will be used to signify the general tradition. When discussing particular realists, or types of realism (such as historical realism), lower case 'r' will be used.

2. A number of critical histories of the field of International Relations have recently challenged the notion that the inter-war period was essentially 'idealist' in character. Both Peter Wilson (1998) and Brian C. Schmidt (1998) argue that it is simply a myth that an idealist paradigm dominated the study of international relations during the interwar period of the field's history.

3. The other 'critical' distinction is made by Richard Ashley who contrasts the 'practical realism' of Machiavelli and Carr with the 'technical realism' of Gilpin and Waltz (1981: 221).

4. What we have termed 'structural realism II' is often referred to in the literature as Neo-Realism. Robert Keohane argues that Neo-Realism differs from earlier forms of Realism 'in that it does not rest on the presumed iniquity of the human race' (1989b: 40). Although Keohane is right to note the shift in causation from human nature to anarchy, he is wrong to believe that this is anything other than a change from one kind of structure to another (hence the use in the chapter of 'structural realism I' and 'II').

5. The extent to which British liberal realism, found in the work of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull constitues a break from Realism, is a matter of some debate in the literature. For contrasting answers, compare Booth (1995b) and Dunne (1998). This is not to suggest that the category liberal realism does not also apply to certain American thinkers, notably Herz (1981).

6. There are a number of similar versions of this idea of a 'shared core' to Realism in the literature. Keohane distils the core into: state as actor, state as rational, state as power maximizer (Keohane 1989b: 39) and (Gilpin 1986: 304–5) are two examples among many.

7. M. J. Smith, 23. Weber is rightly regarded by Smith as the theorist who has shaped twentieth-century realist thought, principally because of his fusion of politics with power.

8. It is important to note that not all conflict results from the security dilemma (since both parties have benign intent); historically, more conflicts have been caused through predator states.

9. Alex Wendt defines constructivism in the following terms: 'Constructivism is a structural theory of the international system which makes the following core claims (1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics' (1994: 385).