

Lecture #2: Classical Realism and Neo-Realism

Classical Realism

Outline of Lecture:

- WWI
- Origins of the IR discipline and “liberal internationalism”
- The League of Nations
- The Realist critique: E.H. Carr
- Realist dominance: Hans Morgenthau

The Shock of WWI

- WWI lasted from 1914-1918...followed by 20 years of big historical events in terms of war history
 - This sparks the idea of ‘International Relations’ at peace conference in 1919
 - 19th century was a period of relative peace
 - People forgot how devastating war could truly be after such long periods of peace
- Extent of devastation from WWI was completely unexpected
- 19th-century background: attitudes towards war
 - People were likely ‘relieved’ when war broke out due to many building tensions
- The carnage: statistics
- People were hoping the war would act as ‘natural selection’ allowing the human race to be more powerful and fit than it already was
- Alliances were quick to form in WWI
- Many people were expecting the war to be a quick and ‘brisk’ war
 - But drags on for four years and was the deadliest conflict that history was aware of thus far
- Consequences were deadly....saw the fall of four major European empires as a result
- The 19th century saw the rise and fall of very influential political ideologies:
 - Ie. Nationalism, colonialism (practice that exists from centuries now but only occurred midway through the 19th century), imperialism, communism, and socialism

Liberal Internationalism and WWI

- WWI and origins of academic discipline of IR
- Liberal internationalism is the dominant approach in IR
- Liberal Internationalism: beliefs
 - People didn't want war
 - National self-determination and democracy
 - VS. diplomacy

- World opinion and education
- International law and International Institutions

League of Nations

- First formal universal International organization
- **Central principal: collective security** (attack on any member State...means an attack on all member states)
 - Ie. NATO
- Early successes
- But later a series of crises
 - Did fail...but also saw a lot of success in dealing with issues such as slavery, refugees, etc.
 - Failures included Italy/Ethiopia in 1935
- WWII breaks out
 - Failure of the LON led to skeptics of collective security
 - The 1930's saw the rise of many totalitarian governance in the European countries

E.H. Carr and the Realist Critique

- The Twenty Years' Crisis (1939)
 - Two traditions of thought about IR
 - "Utopians" (or "idealists") VS. "realists"
 - Believed they confused the way the world was with the way they wanted the world to be
 - Harmony of interests VS. conflicts of Interests
 - Two kinds of States "haves" and "have-nots"
 - Blamed "utopians" (liberal internationalists) for WWII
 - Carr proposes the realist approach to IR
 - Says Liberal Internationalists failed to see politics for its real 'ugliness' and inevitability to cause conflict
- The common interest in peace masks the fact that some nations desire to maintain the status quo without having to fight for it...and others to change the status quo without having to fight to do so
 - The clash of interests is real and inevitable....nature of the problem is distorted by an attempt to disguise it
 - Carr believes that Liberal Internationalism....where States benefited from collective security is an example
 - Underlying State interests, selfish State interests=product of liberal internationalism

What Determines What?

- Practice....Theory

- Interests....Thought
- Politics....Ethics
- Power....Morality
- Theories of social mortality are always the product of a dominant group, which identifies itself with the community as a whole
 - And which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups/individuals for imposing its view of life on the community
- Theories of international mortality are, for the same reason and in virtue of the same?

Hans Morgenthau

- Politics among Nations (1948)
 - Scientific theory: “is”, not “ought”
 - Good intentions are not enough
 - Autonomy of politics and “political man”
 - Politics: rational pursuit of power
 - Rooted in permanent human nature
 - Human nature: self-interested and power seeking
 - States: lust for domination, power
 - IR: timeless, universal features
 - IR: constant “state of war”
 - Balance of power, only hope for stability
- Hans Morgenthau believes that international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power
 - Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim

Neo-Realism

Outline of the Lecture

- History
- Waltz’s criticisms of classical realism
- Levels of analysis, structure and the International system
- Anarchy and the structure of the international system
- The logic of neo-realism

Criticisms of Classical Realism

- Not scientific enough
- Lumped national and international politics together
 - Waltz: fundamentally different

- Over-emphasized role of human nature
 - Human nature doesn't change over time/space but conflict/war does
- Ignored key impact of international system and its structure on States' behaviour

Levels of Analysis

- First "Image": Individuals

- Leaders, psychology
- Human nature

- Second "Image": State and Society

- Type of regime
- Social classes
- Bureaucratic politics

- Third "Image": International System

- System and Structure

- System: collection of related parts ("units")
 - Units interact; are interrelated
 - International system: units= States
 - System: more than sum of parts
- System= units + Structure
- Structure = arrangement of units
 - Not interactions, behaviour

- Structure of International System

- 1. Basic organising principle
 - Anarchy vs. hierarchy
- 2. Differentiation of the units
 - Differentiated vs. undifferentiated
- 3. Distribution of capabilities
 - Polarity (number of great powers)

- To study IR, you cannot just study States, you must study the system as a whole

- Examine the structure of the system...International Units

- What is the structure of the system?

- The structure is the arrangement of units
- Recall that in any structure units are interacting/interrelated....just like the States in IR
- Waltz wants to understand relations between States in a different sense...he examines structure in a different sense

1. Basic Organising Principle (Most Important)

- All social systems are either organized hierarchy or anarchy

- What do these terms mean?:
 - **Anarchy**- without a government (chaos, total disorder is the typical thought)
 - Waltz means there is no ‘world government’, no international State
 - Lack of governance over the States themselves
 - **Hierarchy**- form of social organization
 - Waltz says the best example of this is domestic governance/governance inside States
 - **Within State affairs is hierarchy....between State affairs is anarchy**
 - **For Waltz this is the central feature of IR**
- Anarchy= ‘formally equal to each other’
- Hierarchy= ‘formally unequal to each other’
 - By Stating all States are equal to each other, legally speaking means they all have the same authority...all States in the International system are sovereign, legally they cannot tell each other what to do
 - However, formally they are equal...you could argue that this is not always the case though
- Nationalism- (at odds with State sovereignty) almost all nationalists desire sovereignty and Statehood for their people

Anarchy

- Not: disorder
- **Anarchy (in IR)** = lack of any authority in International system higher than units (States) themselves
- Ie. no central government in IR; no one to tell States what to do and enforce rules
- Units (States) all formally equal (sovereign)

Hierarchy

- See hierarchy pyramid on slide #8 of the neo-liberalism slideshow

2. Differentiation of the Units (States)

Division of Labour

- Functional differentiation of the Units (States)
 - What do we mean by this?
 - Each tier has their own sense of responsibilities...different levels (slaves, merchants,...differing jobs)
 - Every different level performs a different function (in hierarchical States)
- Different units specialise in different functions
 - = “division of labour”
 - Ie. Adam Smith’s pin factory

- DOL: increases efficiency
 - **Global Efficiency-** modern economies are built on divisional labour which is combined for a final product= efficiency
- National economies can grow year after year due to this assembly line ideology
- Hierarchy allows DOL= specialization= efficiency
- Unlike domestic politics...International politics does not have specialization as all States are forced to do things for themselves
 - States are just focusing on day to day survival
- Waltz: hierarchy makes this possible
- So pursuit of “good life”, economic development, social welfare, etc. possible within State
- People can focus on more bare survival

Anarchy: No Functional Differentiation

- IR: “self-help” reigns (due to anarchy)
- States can’t specialize; all tend to perform same functions:
 - Collect taxes
 - Build and maintain civil infrastructure
 - Provide military defence
 - Engage in diplomacy
 - Make and enforce laws
 - Keep public order/safety
 - Provide social security
 - Provide educational services

3. Distribution of Capabilities

Distribution of Capabilities

- Polarity (number of great powers) since the end of the Cold War, hard to know who is the strongest
- States: same functions, but very different abilities to perform those functions
- So capabilities unevenly distributed among units
- **Neo-realists: military defence, most important function**
 - Necessary to perform all others
- So in practice:
 - **Distribution of capabilities in the International System= distribution of military capabilities**
 - **Distribution of military power is the only capability Waltz is examining (helps to explain and predict IR)**

Distribution of Capabilities= Polarity

- But in the distribution of military capabilities, not all States matter
- Only actions of great powers shape structure of the whole system
 - We can safely ignore everyone else
- So how to measure DOC in a system?
 - Count the number of great powers
 - Which equals polarity of the system
 - Unipolar, bipolar, tripolar, multipolar, etc.
- Waltz wants us to understand the structure of the International system in terms of the countries and States as how they are positioned in relation to each other (ranking of power)...ordering of the States
 - How they compare to each other....this is how Waltz examines the structure of the International System as the ARRANGEMENT
 - When Waltz uses the word arrangement, he's specifically talking about the hierarchy and ranking, rather than the relations and interactions between the States

Logic of Neo-Realism

Anarchy

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Self-help

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Security dilemma

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Relative gains concerns

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Competition, conflict, war