Reader’s Guide

Realism is the dominant theory of International Relations. Why? Because it provides the most powerful explanation for the state of war that 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 that 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 classical and structural realism, it is possible to identify a shared core set of assumptions and ideas. The third section outlines these common elements, which we identify as self-help, statism, and survival. In the final section, we return to the question of how far realism is relevant for explaining or understanding the globalization of world politics. Although there are many voices claiming that a new set of forces is challenging the Westphalian state system, realists are generally sceptical of these claims, arguing that the same basic patterns that have shaped international politics in the past remain just as relevant today.
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 the First World War, 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. For example, they ignored the role of power, overestimated the degree to which human beings were rational, mistakenly believed that nation-states shared a set of interests, and were overly optimistic that humankind could overcome the scourge of war. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 confirmed, for the realists at least, the inadequacies of the idealists’ approach to studying international politics.

A new approach, one based on the timeless insights of realism, replaced the discredited idealist approach. 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, 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. 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. Realism taught American leaders to focus on interests rather than on 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 dominant tradition in the study of world politics. The theory of realism that prevailed after the Second World War is often claimed to rest on an older, classical tradition of thought. 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), Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). The insights that these realists offered into 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.

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’ (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 shall see, the assumption that the state is the principal actor, coupled with the view that the environment that states inhabit is a perilous place, helps 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: 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 with traditional Christian virtues but with 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 conditions 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. Preserving the life of the state and the ethical community it envelops becomes a moral duty of the statesperson. Thus it is not the case that realists are unethical; rather they find that sometimes ‘it is kind to be cruel’ (Desch 2003).

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 realism and modern variants. 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 structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz.

Realism identifies the group as the fundamental unit of political analysis. When Thucydides and Machiavelli were writing, the basic unit was the polis or city-state, but since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) realists consider the sovereign state as the principal 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 within its domestic borders. 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.

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 illustrate the qualitatively different result this struggle has on international politics as compared to domestic politics ([1948] 1955: 25). 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 considers itself to be its own highest authority and does not recognize a higher power. Conversely, domestic politics is often described as a hierarchical 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 (for example, Poland has experienced this fate four times in the past three centuries). 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 has traditionally been defined narrowly in military strategic terms. Yet irrespective of how much power a state may possess, the core national interest of all states must be survival. Like the pursuit of power, the promotion of the national interest is, according to realists, 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 its own well-being and survival. 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 United Nations. States, in short, should not depend on other states to ensure their own security. Unlike in domestic politics, there is no emergency number that states can dial when they are in mortal danger.

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.

The peaceful conclusion of the cold war caught many realists off guard. Given that many realists claim a scientific basis to their causal account of the world, it is not surprising that their inability to foresee the dynamics that led to the end of the bipolar cold war system sparked the publication of several powerful critiques of realist theory. Critics also maintained that realism was unable to provide a persuasive account of new developments such as regional integration, humanitarian intervention, the emergence of a security community in Western Europe, and the growing incidence of intra-state war wracking the global South. In addition, proponents of globalization argued that realism’s privileged actor, the state, was in decline relative to non-state actors such as transnational corporations and powerful regional institutions. Critics also contend that realism is unable to explain the increasing incidence of intra-state wars plaguing the global South. As Box 5.1 discusses, realists claim that their theory does indeed explain the incidence of intra-state conflicts. The cumulative weight of these criticisms led many to question the analytical and moral adequacy of realist thought.

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 robust form of structural realism in the 1980s. 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 that remain true across time (history) and space (geopolitics). Thus while political conditions have changed since the end of the cold war, realists believe that the world continues to operate according to the logic of realism. The question whether realism does embody ‘timeless truths’ about politics will be returned to in the conclusion of the chapter.

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**Box 5.1 Realism and intra-state war**

Since the end of the cold war, intra-state war (internal conflicts in one state) have become more prevalent than inter-state war. Since realists generally focus on the latter type of conflict, critics contend that realism is irrelevant to the predicament of the global South that has been wracked by nationalist and ethnic wars. But this is not the case, and realists have turned their attention to analysing the causes of intra-state war and recommending solutions.

Structural realists maintain that when the sovereign authority of the state collapses, such as in Somalia and Haiti, internal wars happen for many of the same reasons that wars between states happen. In a fundamental sense, the dichotomy between domestic order and international disorder breaks down when the state loses the legitimate authority to rule. The resulting anarchy inside the state is analogous to the anarchy among states. In such a situation, realist theory contends that the different groups inside the state will vie for power in an attempt to gain a sense of security. Barry Posen (1993) has applied the key realist concept of the security dilemma to explain the political dynamics that result when different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups suddenly find themselves responsible for their own security. He argues that it is natural to expect that security will be their first priority and that they will seek the means to perpetuate their own existence. Yet, just as in the case of states, one group’s attempt to enhance its security will create uncertainty in the minds of rival groups, which will in turn seek to augment their own power. Realists argue that this revolving spiral of distrust and uncertainty leads to intense security competition and often to military conflict among the various independent groups who were earlier subject to the sovereign power of the state.

In addition to analysing the cause of intra-state wars, realists have prescribed solutions. Unlike many liberal solutions to civil and ethnic wars that rest on power-sharing agreements and the creation of multi-ethnic states, realists have advocated separation or partition. For realists, anarchy can be eliminated by creating a central government. And while the creation of multi-ethnic states might be a noble endeavour, realists argue that they do not have a very good success rate. Ethnically homogeneous states are held by realists to be more stable and less dependent on outside military occupation.
The intellectual exercise of articulating a unified theory of realism has been criticized by writers who are both sympathetic and critical of the tradition (M. J. Smith 1986; Doyle 1997). The belief that there is not one realism, but many, leads logically to a delineation of different types of realism. A number of thematic classifications have been offered to differentiate realism into a variety of distinct categories. The most simple distinction is a form of periodization that differentiates realism into three historical periods: classical realism (up to the twentieth century), which is frequently depicted as beginning with Thucydides' text on the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta and incorporating the ideas of many of those included in the classic canon of Western political thought; modern realism (1939–79), which typically takes the so-called First Great Debate between the scholars of the inter-war period and a new wave of scholars who began to enter the field immediately before and after the Second World War as its point of departure; and structural or neo-realism (1979 onwards), which officially entered the picture following the publication of Kenneth Waltz’s landmark text *Theory of International Politics* (1979). While these different periods suggest a neat historical sequence, they are problematic in so far as they close down the important question about divergence within each historical phase. Rather than opt for the neat but intellectually unsatisfactory system of historical periodization, we outline below our own representation of realisms that makes important connections with existing categories deployed by other thinkers in the field. A summary of the varieties of realism outlined below is contained in Table 5.1.

**Classical realism**

The classical realist 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 that frequently reappears in the leading works of the classical realist canon, most famously in the work of the high priest of post-war realism, Hans J. Morgenthau. Classical realists argue that it is from the nature of man that the essential features of international politics, such as competition, fear, and war, can be explained. 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.

Another distinguishing characteristic of classical realism is its adherents’ belief in the primordial character of power and ethics. Classical realism is fundamentally about the struggle for belonging, a struggle that is often violent. Patriotic virtue is required in order for communities to survive in this historic battle between good and evil, a virtue that long predates the emergence of sovereignty-based notions of community in the mid-seventeenth century. Classical realists therefore differ from contemporary realists in the sense that they engaged with moral philosophy and sought to reconstruct an understanding of virtue in light of practice and historical circumstance. Two classical realists who
Table 5.1 A taxonomy of realisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of realism</th>
<th>Key thinkers</th>
<th>Key texts</th>
<th>'Big Idea'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical realism</td>
<td>Thucydides (c. 430-406 BC)</td>
<td><em>The Peloponnesian War</em></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Human nature)</td>
<td>Machiavelli (1532)</td>
<td><em>The Prince</em></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morgenthau (1948)</td>
<td><em>Politics among Nations</em></td>
<td>Politics is governed by laws that are created by human nature. The mechanism we use to understand international politics is the concept of interests, defined in terms of power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural realism</td>
<td>Rousseau (c. 1750)</td>
<td><em>The State of War</em></td>
<td>It is not human nature but the anarchical system that fosters fear, jealousy, suspicion, and insecurity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(international system)</td>
<td>Waltz (1979)</td>
<td><em>Theory of International Politics</em></td>
<td>Anarchy leads to a logic of self-help in which states seek to maximize their security. The most stable distribution of power in the system is bipolarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoclassical realism</td>
<td>Zakaria (1998)</td>
<td><em>From Wealth to Power</em></td>
<td>The systemic account of world politics provided by structural realism is incomplete. It needs to be supplemented with better accounts of unit-level variables such as how power is perceived, and how leadership is exercised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

wrestled with the degree to which state leaders could be guided by ethical considerations were Thucydides and Machiavelli.

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 was ‘the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta’ (1.23). This 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. (See our case study, The Melian dialogue.)

Later classical realists—namely, Machiavelli and Morgenthau—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 the vulnerability of Machiavelli’s beloved Florence to the expansionist policies of external great powers. In Morgenthau’s era, there were many examples where the innate drive for more power and territory seemed to confirm the realist iron law: for example, Nazi Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1939, and the Soviet Union and Hungary in 1956. The seemingly endless cycle of war and conflict confirmed in the minds of twentieth-century classical realists the essentially aggressive impulses in human nature. How is a leader supposed to act in a world animated by such dark forces? The answer given by Machiavelli is that all obligations and treaties with other states must be disregarded if the security of the community is under threat. Moreover, imperial expansion is legitimate as it is a means of gaining greater security. Other classical realists, however, advocate a more temperate understanding
of moral conduct. Mid-twentieth-century realists such as Butterfield, Carr, Morgenthau, and Wolfers believed that anarchy could be mitigated by wise leadership and the pursuit of the national interest in ways that are compatible with international order. Taking their lead from Thucydides, they recognized that acting purely on the basis of power and self-interest without any consideration of moral and ethical principles frequently results in self-defeating policies. After all, as Thucydides showed, Athens suffered an epic defeat while following the realist tenet of self-interest.

Structural realism

Structural realists concur that international politics is essentially a struggle for power but they do not endorse the classical realist assumption that this is a result of human nature. Instead, structural realists attribute security competition and inter-state conflict to the lack of an overarching authority above states and the relative distribution of power in the international system. Waltz defined the structure of the international system in terms of three elements—organizing principle, differentiation of units, and distribution of capabilities. Waltz identifies two different organizing principles: anarchy, which corresponds to the decentralized realm of international politics; and hierarchy, which is the basis of domestic order. He argues that the units of the international system are functionally similar sovereign states; hence unit-level variation is irrelevant in explaining international outcomes. It is the third tier, the distribution of capabilities across units, that is, according to Waltz, of fundamental
importance to understanding crucial international outcomes. According to structural realists, the relative distribution of power in the international system is the key independent variable in understanding important international outcomes such as war and peace, alliance politics, and the balance of power. Structural realists are interested in providing a rank-ordering of states so as to be able to differentiate and count the number of great powers that exist at any particular point in time. The number of great powers, in turn, determines the structure of the international system. For example, during the cold war from 1945 to 1989 there were two great powers—the USA and the Soviet Union—that constituted the bipolar international system.

How does the international distribution of power impact the behaviour of states, particularly their power-seeking behaviour? In the most general sense, Waltz argues that states, especially the great powers, have to be sensitive to the capabilities of other states. The possibility that any state may use force to advance its interests results in all states being worried about their survival. According to Waltz, power is a means to the end of security. In a significant passage, Waltz writes 'because power is a possibly useful means, sensible statesmen try to have an appropriate amount of it'. He adds, 'in crucial situations, however, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security' (Waltz 1989: 40). In other words, rather than being power maximizers, states, according to Waltz, are security maximizers. Waltz argues that power maximization often proves to be dysfunctional because it triggers a counter-balancing coalition of states.

A different account of the power dynamics that operate in the anarchic system is provided by John Mearsheimer’s theory of offensive realism, which is another variant of structural realism. While sharing many of the basic assumptions of Waltz’s structural realist theory, which is frequently termed defensive realism, Mearsheimer differs from Waltz when it comes to describing the behaviour of states. Most fundamentally, ‘offensive realism parts company with defensive realism over the question of how much power states want’ (Mearsheimer 2001: 21). According to Mearsheimer, the structure of the international system compels states to maximize their relative power position. Under anarchy, he agrees that self-help is the basic principle of action. Yet he also argues that not only do all states possess some offensive military capability, but there is a great deal of uncertainty about the intentions of other states. Consequently, Mearsheimer concludes that there are no satisfied or status quo states; rather, all states are continuously searching for opportunities to gain power at the expense of other states. Contrary to Waltz, Mearsheimer argues that states recognize that the best path to peace is to accumulate more power than anyone else. Indeed, the ideal position, although one that Mearsheimer argues is virtually impossible to achieve, is to be the global hegemon of the international system. Yet because Mearsheimer believes that global hegemony is impossible, he concludes that the world is condemned to perpetual great power competition.

Contemporary realist challenges to structural realism

While offensive realism makes an important contribution to realism, some contemporary realists are sceptical of the notion that the international distribution of power alone can explain the behaviour of states. Since the end of the cold war a group of scholars have attempted to move beyond the parsimonious assumptions of structural realism and incorporated a number of additional factors located at the individual and domestic level into their explanation of international politics. While systemic factors are recognized to be an important influence on the behaviour of states, so are factors such as the perceptions of state leaders, state-society relationships, and the motivation of states. In attempting to build a bridge between structural and unit-level factors (which many classical realists emphasized), this group of scholars has been characterized by Gideon Rose (1998) as ‘neoclassical realism’: According to Stephen Walt, the causal logic of neoclassical realism ‘places domestic politics as an intervening variable between the distribution of power and foreign policy behavior’ (Walt 2002: 211).

One important intervening variable is leaders themselves, namely how they perceive the international distribution of power. There is no objective, independent reading of the distribution of power; rather, what matters is how state leaders derive an understanding of the distribution of power. While structural realists assume that all states have a similar set of interests, neoclassical realists such as Randall Schweller (1996) argue that historically this is not the case. He argues that, with respect to Waltz, the assumption that all states have an interest in security results in neo-realism exhibiting a profoundly status quo basis. Schweller returns to the writings of realists such as Morgenthau and Kissinger to remind us of the key distinction that they made between status quo and revisionist states. Neoclassical realists would argue that the fact that Germany was a revisionist state in the 1930s
and a status quo state since the end of the Second World War is of fundamental importance to understanding its role in the international system. Not only do states differ in terms of their interests; they also differ in terms of their ability to extract and direct resources from the societies they rule. Fareed Zakaria (1998) introduces the intervening variable of state strength into his theory of state-centred realism. State strength is defined as the ability of a state to mobilize and direct the resources at its disposal in the pursuit of particular interests. Neoclassical realists argue that different types of state possess different capacities to translate the various elements of national power into state power. Thus, contrary to Waltz, all states cannot be treated as `like units'.

Given the varieties of realism that exist, it is hardly surprising that the overall coherence of the realist tradition of enquiry has been questioned. The answer to the question of `coherence' is, of course, contingent upon how strict the criteria are for judging the continuities that 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. Despite the different strands running through the tradition, there is a sense in which all realists have a common set of propositions.

The essential realism

The previous paragraphs have argued that realism is a theoretically 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. 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 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' (M. J. Smith 1986: 23). 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. The first move for the realist, then, is to organize power domestically. 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. 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.

Realists claim that, in anarchy, states compete with other states for power and security. The nature of the competition is 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. 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'. As evidenced by the most recent behaviour of the USA in
Afghanistan and Iraq, powerful states are able to overturn the non-intervention principle on the grounds of national security and international order.

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 is often reduced to counting the number of troops, tanks, aircraft, and naval ships a country possesses in the belief that this translates into the ability to get other actors to do something they would not otherwise do.

A number of criticisms have been made as to how realists define and measure power, many of which are discussed in later chapters. Critics argue that realism has been purchased at a discount precisely because its currency, power, has remained under-theorized and inconsistently used. Simply asserting that states seek power provides no answer to crucial questions. Why do states struggle for power? Surely power is a means to an end rather than an end in itself? Is there not a difference between the mere possession of power and the ability to change the behaviour of others?

Structural realists have attempted to bring more conceptual clarity to bear on the meaning of power. 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 of 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 ideologically driven terrorist networks, such as Al Qaeda, rise and fall but the state is the one permanent feature in the landscape of modern global politics. Yet many today question the adequacy of the state-centric assumption of realism.

Survival

The second principle that unites realists is the assertion that, in international politics, the pre-eminent goal is survival. Although there is 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 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, as we mentioned in the previous section, a recent controversy among structural realists has arisen over the question of whether states are in fact principally security or power maximizers. Defensive realists such as Waltz argue that states have security as their principal interest and therefore seek only 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 realists such as Mearsheimer argue 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.
Niccolò 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 that would enable leaders to maintain their hold on power. 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 from those that 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 performed 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. The principal difficulty with the realist formulation of an ‘ethics of responsibility’ is that, while instructing leaders to consider the consequences of their actions, it does not provide a guide as 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. This moral relativism has generated a substantial body of criticism, particularly from liberal theorists who endorse the notion of universal human rights. For a fuller discussion see Chapter 6.

**Self-help**

Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* (1979) 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 also 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**. 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 those of 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.

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 anarchic system populated by states that seek to perpetuate themselves, alliances will be formed that seek to check and balance the power against threatening states. Classical realists, however, are more likely to emphasize the crucial role that 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.

There is a lively debate among realists concerning the stability of the balance of power system. This is especially the case today, in that many argue that the balance of power has been replaced by unipolarity. It is questionable whether other countries will actively attempt to balance against the USA, as structural realism would predict. 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 through 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.

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 cooperate 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 a basis for understanding the problem of coordinating 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 militates 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 free movement 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. Thus the question is not whether all will be better off through cooperation, but rather who is likely to gain more than another. It is because of this concern with relative gains issues that realists argue that cooperation is difficult to achieve in a self-help system.

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 that has jurisdictional authority over its territory.
- **Key criticism:** statism is flawed on both 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.
- **Key criticism:** are there no limits to what actions a state can take in the name of necessity?
- **Self-help:** no other state or institution can be relied upon to guarantee your survival.
- **Key criticism:** self-help is not an inevitable consequence of the absence of a world government; it is a logic that states have selected. Moreover, there are historical and contemporary examples where states have preferred collective security systems, or forms of regional security communities, in preference to self-help.

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**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 by 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 increasingly problematic in the present age of globalization. But the importance of realism has not been diminished by the dynamics of globalization. It is not clear that economic **interdependence** has made war less likely. The state continues to be the dominant unit in world politics. And globalization should not be seen as a process that is disconnected from the distribution of power in the international system. In this sense, this current phase of globalization is fundamentally tied to Westernization and, to be even more specific, Americanization.

Not surprisingly, realist thinkers have been quick to seize on the apparent convergence between our post-
9/11 experience and the cycle of violence predicted by the theory. There were, however, some apparent contradictions in the realist account of the conflict. To begin with, the attacks on the US homeland were committed by a non-state actor. Not only was the enemy a global network of Al Qaeda operatives; their goal was unconventional in that they did not seek to conquer territory but challenge by force the ideological supremacy of the West. Set against these anomalies, the leading states in the system were quick to identify the network with certain territorial states—the Taliban government of Afghanistan being the most immediate example, but also other pariah states that allegedly harboured terrorists. The USA rushed to link the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Iraq with its global war on terror. Moreover, rather than identifying the terrorists as transnational criminals and using police enforcement methods to counter their threat, the USA and its allies defined them as enemies of the state that had to be targeted and defeated using conventional military means.

For realists such as Colin Gray and Kenneth Waltz, 9/11 was not the beginning of a new era in world politics so much as a case of 'business as usual' (see their essays in Booth and Dunne 2002). For Waltz, the Iraq War illustrated the tendency for states with overwhelming power to misuse it. While neoconservatives in the Bush administration championed the virtues of American hegemony, the pre-emptive use of military force, and democracy promotion, realists viewed this as a recipe for disaster (Schmidt and Williams 2008). The liberal crusading aspect of post-9/11 American foreign policy has resulted in a number of scholars returning to the insights of classical realists such as Morgenthau and Kennan, who had earlier warned of the dangers that follow when states neglect their core national interests. Most realists argued that the Iraq War was not in the American national interest, and were public in their condemnation (see Box 5.2). Iraq, they argued, could have been deterred from threatening both the security of the USA and its neighbours in the Middle East. It is now obvious that the costly military intervention and lengthy occupation of Iraq has weakened the USA's ability to contain the rising threat from China.

Realists do not have to situate their theory of world politics in opposition to globalization per se; rather, what they offer is a very different conceptualization of the process. Their analysis is a stark rejoinder to the more idealist defenders of globalization who see a new pacific world order emerging out of the ashes of the previous order. What is important about a realist view of globalization is the claim that rudimentary transnational governance is possible, but at the same time it is entirely dependent on the distribution of power. Given the preponderance of power that the USA holds, it should not be a surprise that it has been one of the foremost proponents of globalization. The core values of globalization—liberalism, capitalism, and consumerism—are exactly those espoused by the USA. At a deeper cultural level, realists argue that modernity is not, as liberals hope, dissolving the boundaries of difference among the peoples of the world. From classical realists such as Rousseau to structural realists such as Waltz, protagonists have argued that interdependence is as likely to breed 'mutual vulnerability' as peace and prosperity. And while questioning the extent to which the world has become any more interdependent in relative terms, realists insist that the state is not going to be eclipsed by global forces operating either below or above the nation-state. Nationalism, realists have continuously reminded us, remains a potent force in world politics.

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**Box 5.2 Realism against wars: an unlikely alliance?**

Realists are often portrayed as advocates of an aggressive foreign policy. Such a representation has always lacked credibility. Hans Morgenthau opposed the US war against the North Vietnamese on the grounds that it defied a rational understanding of the national interest. He believed that US goals were not attainable 'without unreasonable moral liabilities and military risks' (M. J. Smith 1986: 158). The US-led war against Iraq in 2003 is the most recent example of realism's council against the use of force. As the intense round of negotiations were under way in the Security Council, in the autumn of 2002, 34 leading realist thinkers co-signed an advertisement in the New York Times entitled 'War with Iraq is Not in America's National Interest' (Art *et al.*, original emphasis). John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt developed this position further in early 2004.

Why, they asked, had the USA given up on the policy of deterrence, which proved to be successful during the cold war? They end the article with a bold, and some might say prescient, conclusion:

> This war would be one the Bush administration chose to fight but did not have to fight. Even if such a war goes well and has positive long-range consequences, it will still have been unnecessary. And if it goes badly—whether in the form of high U.S. casualties, significant civilian deaths, a heightened risk of terrorism, or increased hatred of the United States in the Arab and Islamic world—then its architects will have even more to answer for.

*Mearsheimer and Walt 2003: 59*
There are good reasons for thinking that the twenty-first century will be a realist century. Despite efforts of federalists to rekindle the idealist flame, Europe continues to be as divided by different national interests as it is united by a common good. As Jacques Chirac put it in 2000, a 'united Europe of states' was much more likely than a 'United States of Europe'. Outside Europe and North America, many of the assumptions that 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'. If China continues its rate of economic growth, it will be more economically powerful than the USA by 2020 (Mearsheimer 1990: 398). By then, realism leads us to predict that Western norms of individual rights and responsibilities will be under threat. Rather than transforming global politics in its own image, as liberalism has sought to do in the twentieth century, realism may need to assert itself in the West in order for Western traditions and values to survive the twenty-first.

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 now than an Athenian student did during the Peloponnesian War?
4. Do realists confuse a description of war and conflict for an explanation of why they occur?
5. Is realism anything more than the ideology of powerful, satisfied states?
6. How would a realist explain the war on terror?
7. Will the West have to learn to be more realist, and not less, if its civilization is to survive in the twenty-first century?
8. What is at stake in the debate between defensive and offensive realism?
9. Is structural realism sufficient to account for the variation in the behaviour of states?
10. Can realism help us to understand the globalization of world politics?

Further Reading

For a general survey of the realist tradition

Guzzini, S. (1998), Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy


**Twentieth-century classical realism**


**Structural realism**


Mearsheimer, J. (2001), *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton). This is the definitive account of offensive realism.

Waltz, K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley). This the exemplar for structural realism.

**Neoclassical realism**

Rose, G. (1998), ‘Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy’, *World Politics*, 51: 144–72. An important review article that is credited with coinage the term ‘neoclassical realism’.


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**Notes**

1 A number of critical histories of the field of International Relations have recently challenged the notion that the inter-war period was essentially ‘idealistic’ 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 inter-war period of the field’s history.

2 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.
Chapter 6

Liberalism

TIM DUNNE
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. The introductory section of the chapter will address this dilemma before providing a definition of liberalism and its component parts. The second section considers the core concepts of liberalism, beginning with the visionary internationalism of the Enlightenment, through to the idealism of the inter-war period, and the institutionalism that became dominant in the second half of the twentieth century. The third and final section considers liberalism in an era of globalization: in particular, it contrasts a status quo reading of the liberal project with a radicalized version that seeks to promote and extend cosmopolitan values and institutions.
Introduction

Although realism is regarded as the dominant theory of international relations, liberalism has a strong claim to being the historic alternative. In the twentieth century, liberal thinking influenced policy-making elites 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 the Second World War with the birth of the United Nations, although this beacon of hope was soon extinguished by the return of cold war power politics. In the 1990s, liberalism reappeared resurgent as Western state leaders proclaimed a new world order and intellectuals provided theoretical justifications for the inherent supremacy of their liberal ideas over all other competing ideologies. After 9/11, the pendulum has once again swung towards the realist pole as the USA and its allies have sought to consolidate their power and punish those whom they define as terrorists and the states that provide them with shelter.

How do we explain the divergent fortunes of liberalism in the domestic and international domains? While liberal values and institutions have become deeply embedded in Europe and North America, the same values and institutions lack legitimacy worldwide. To invoke the famous phrase of Stanley Hoffmann’s, ‘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. Despite the weight of this realist argument, those who believe in the liberal project have not conceded defeat. Liberals argue that power politics itself is the product of ideas, and, crucially, ideas can change. Therefore, even if the world has been inhospitable to liberalism, this does not mean that it cannot be re-made in its image.

While the belief in the possibility of progress is one identifier of a liberal approach to politics (Clark 1989: 49–66), there are other general propositions that define the broad tradition of liberalism. Perhaps the appropriate way to begin this discussion is with a four-dimensional definition (Doyle 1997: 207). First, all citizens are juridically equal and possess certain basic rights to education, access to a free press, and religious toleration. Second, the legislative assembly of the state possesses only the authority invested in it by the people, whose basic rights it is not permitted to abuse. Third, a key dimension of the liberty of the individual is the right to own property, including productive forces. Fourth, liberalism contends that the most effective system of economic exchange is one that is largely market driven and not one that is subordinate to bureaucratic regulation and control, either domestically or internationally. When these propositions are taken together, we see a stark contrast between liberal values of individualism, tolerance, freedom, and constitutionalism; and conservatism, which places a higher value on order and authority and is willing to sacrifice the liberty of the individual for the stability of the community.

Although many writers have tended to view liberalism as a theory of government, what is becoming increasingly apparent is the explicit connection between liberalism as a political and economic theory and liberalism as an international theory. Properly conceived, liberal thought on global scale rests on the application of an analogy from the character of a political actor to its international conduct. Like individuals, states have different characteristics—some are bellicose and war-prone, others are tolerant and peaceful: in short, the identity of the state determines its outward orientation. Liberals see a further parallel between individuals and sovereign states. Although the character of states may differ, all states are accorded certain ‘natural’ rights, such as the generalized right to non-intervention in their domestic affairs. On another level, the domestic analogy refers to the extension of ideas that originated inside liberal states to the international realm, such as the coordinating role played by institutions and the centrality of the rule of law to the idea of a just order. In a sense, the historical project of liberalism is the domestication of the international.

Liberals concede that we have far to go before this goal has been reached. Historically, liberals have agreed with realists that war is a recurring feature of the anarchic system. But unlike realists, they do not identify anarchy as the cause of war. How, then, do liberals explain war? As Box 6.1 demonstrates, certain strands of liberalism see the causes of war located in imperialism, others in the failure of the balance of power, and still others in the problem of undemocratic regimes. And
ought this to be remedied through collective security, commerce, or world government? While it can be productive to think about the various strands of liberal thought and their differing prescriptions (Doyle 1997: 205–300), given the limited space permitted to deal with a broad and complex tradition, the emphasis below will be on the core concepts of international liberalism and the way in which these relate to the goals of order and justice on a global scale.²

At the end of the chapter, the discussion will return to a tension that lies in the heart of the liberal theory of politics. As can be seen from a critical appraisal of the four-fold definition presented above, liberalism pulls in two directions: its commitment to freedom in the economic and social spheres leans in the direction of a minimalist role for governing institutions, while the democratic political culture required for basic freedoms to be safeguarded requires robust and interventionist institutions. This has variously been interpreted as a tension between different liberal goals, or more broadly as a sign of rival and incompatible conceptions of liberalism. Should a liberal polity—no matter what the size or scale—preserve the right of individuals to retain property and privilege, or should liberalism elevate equality over liberty so that resources are redistributed from the strong to the weak? When we are looking at politics on a global scale, it is clear that inequalities are far greater while at the same time our institutional capacity to do something about them is that much less. As writers on globalization remind us, the intensification of global flows in trade, resources, and people has weakened the state’s capacity to govern. Closing this gap requires nothing short of a radical reconfiguration of the relationship between territoriality and governance.

Key Points

- Liberalism is a theory of both government within states and good governance between states and peoples worldwide. Unlike realism, which regards the ‘international’ as an anarchic realm, liberalism seeks to project values of order, liberty, justice, and toleration into international relations.
- 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.
- Domestic and international institutions are required to protect and nurture these values.
- Liberals disagree on fundamental issues such as the causes of war and what kind of institutions are required to deliver liberal values in a decentralized, multicultural international system.
- An important cleavage within liberalism, which has become more pronounced in our globalized world, is between those operating with a positive conception of liberalism, who advocate interventionist foreign policies and stronger international institutions, and those who incline towards a negative conception, which places a priority on toleration and non-intervention.
Core ideas in liberal thinking on international relations

Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham were two of the leading liberals 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 state of savagery led them individually to elaborate plans for ‘perpetual peace’. Although written over two centuries ago, these manifestos contain the seeds of core liberal 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 earlier international lawyers had argued). This federation can be likened to a permanent peace treaty, rather than a ‘superstate’ actor or world government. The three components of Kant’s hypothetical treaty for a permanent peace are outlined in Box 6.2.

Kant’s claim that liberal states are pacific in their international relations with other liberal states was revived in the 1980s. In a much-cited article, Michael Doyle argued that liberal states have created a ‘separate peace’ (1986: 1151). According to Doyle, there are two elements to the Kantian legacy: restraint among liberal states and ‘international imprudence’ in relations with non-liberal states. 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, believers in the thesis need to provide an explanation as to why war has become unthinkable between liberal states. Kant had argued that if the decision to use force were 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 USA is unthinkable, perhaps not because of their liberal democratic constitutions, but because they are friends (Wendt 1999: 298–9), with a high degree of convergence in economic and political matters. 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, which maintain close bilateral relations despite their history of divergent 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 (1989: 3–18). Other defenders of the democratic peace thesis were more circumspect. As Doyle recognized, liberal democracies are as aggressive as any other type of state in their relations with authoritarian regimes and stateless peoples (1995b: 100). How, then, should states inside the liberal zone of peace conduct their relations with non-liberal regimes? How can the positive Kantian legacy of restraint triumph over the historical legacy of international impudence on the part of liberal states? These are fascinating and timely questions that will be taken up in the final section of the chapter.

Two centuries after Kant first called for a ‘peaceful federation’, the validity of the idea that democracies are more peaceful continues to attract a great deal of scholarly interest. The claim has also found its way into the public discourse of Western states’ foreign policy, appearing in speeches made by US presidents as diverse as Ronald Reagan, William Jefferson Clinton, and George W. Bush. Less crusading voices within the liberal tradition believe that a legal and institutional framework must be established that includes states with different cultures and traditions. Such a belief in the power of law to solve the problem of war was advocated by Jeremy Bentham at the end of the eighteenth century: ‘Establish a common tribunal’ 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’.

Cobden’s belief that free trade would create a more peaceful world order is a core idea of nineteenth-century liberalism. Trade brings mutual gains to all the players, irrespective of their size or the nature of their economies. It is perhaps not surprising that it was in Britain that this argument found its most vocal supporters. The supposed universal value of free trade brought disproportionate gains to the hegemonic power. There was never an admission that free trade among countries at different stages of development would lead to relations of dominance and subservience.

The idea of a natural harmony of interests in international political and economic relations came under challenge in the early part of the twentieth century. The fact that Britain and Germany had highly interdependent economies before the Great War (1914–18) seemed to confirm the fatal flaw in the association of economic 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 15 million people. The war not only brought an end to three empires but also was 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 that 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 this US president, peace could only be secured with the creation of an international organization to regulate international anarchy. Security could not be left to secret bilateral diplomatic deals and a blind faith in the balance of power. Just as peace had to be enforced in domestic society, the international domain had to have a system of regulation for coping with disputes and an international force that could be mobilized if non-violent conflict resolution failed. In this sense, more than any other strand of liberalism, idealism rests on the 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—the League of Nations was to be that general association. 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 that 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 the case of the League of Nations, Article 16 of the League’s Charter 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 League’s constitution also called for the self-determination of all nations, another founding characteristic of liberal idealist thinking on international relations. Going back to the mid-nineteenth century, self-determination movements in Greece, Hungary, and Italy received support among liberal powers and public opinion. Yet the default support for self-determination masked a host of practical and moral problems that were laid bare after Woodrow Wilson issued his proclamation. What would happen to newly created minorities who felt no allegiance to the self-determining state? Could a democratic process adequately deal with questions of identity—who was to decide what constituency was to participate in a ballot? And what if a newly self-determined state rejected liberal democratic norms?

The experience of the League of Nations was a disaster. While 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 USA’s 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).

According to the history of the discipline of International Relations, the collapse of the League of Nations dealt a fatal blow to idealism. There is no doubt that the language of liberalism after 1945 was more pragmatic; how could anyone living in the shadow of the Holocaust be optimistic? Yet familiar core ideas of liberalism remained. Even in the early 1940s, there was 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). It was not until the end of the cold war that a collective security system was put into operation, following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August 1990 (see Case Study).

An important argument advanced by liberals in the early post-war period concerned the state’s inability to cope with modernization. David Mittry (1943), a pioneer integration theorist, argued that transnational cooperation was required in order to resolve common problems. His core concept was ramification, meaning the likelihood that cooperation 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 cooperative ventures increases.

This argument about the positive benefits from transnational cooperation is one that informed a new generation of scholars (particularly in the USA) in the 1960s and 1970s. Their argument was not simply about the mutual gains from trade, but that other transnational actors were beginning to challenge the dominance of sovereign states. World politics, according to pluralists (as they are often referred to) was 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 (1972) argued that the centrality of other actors, such as interest groups, transnational corporations, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), had to be taken into consideration. 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 IR 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 in which ‘changes in one part of the system have direct and indirect consequences for the rest of the system’ (Little 1996: 77). Absolute state autonomy, so keenly entrenched in the minds of state leaders, was being circumscribed by interdependence. Such a development
brought with it enhanced potential for cooperation as well as increased levels of vulnerability.

In his 1979 work, *Theory of International Politics*, the neo-realist Kenneth Waltz attacked the pluralist argument about the decline of the state. He argued that the degree of interdependence internationally was far lower than the constituent parts in a national political system. Moreover, the level of economic interdependence—especially between great powers—was less than that which existed in the early part of the twentieth century. Waltz concludes: ‘if one is thinking of the international-political world, it is odd in the extreme that “interdependence” has become the word commonly used to describe it’ (1979: 144). In the course of their engagement with Waltz and other neo-realists, early pluralists modified their position. Neo-liberals, as they came to be known, conceded that the core assumptions of neo-realism were indeed correct: the anarchic international structure, the centrality of states, and a rationalist approach to social scientific enquiry. Where they differed was apparent primarily in the argument that anarchy does not mean that durable patterns of cooperation are impossible: the creation of international regimes matters here as they facilitate cooperation by sharing information, reinforcing reciprocity, and making defection from norms easier to punish (see Ch. 17). Moreover, in what was to become the most important difference between neo-realists and neo-liberals (developed further in Ch. 7), the latter argued that actors would enter into cooperative agreements if the gains were evenly shared. Neo-realists dispute this hypothesis: what matters is a question not so much of mutual gains as of relative gains: in other words, a neo-realist state has to be sure that it has more to gain than its rivals from a particular bargain or regime.

There are two important arguments that set neoliberals apart from democratic peace liberalism and the liberal idealists of the inter-war period. First, academic enquiry should be guided by a commitment to a scientific approach to theory building. Whatever deeply held personal values scholars maintain, their task must be to observe regularities, formulate hypotheses as to why they relationship holds, and subject these to critical scrutiny. This separation of fact and value puts neo-liberals on the positivist side of the methodological divide. Second, writers such as Keohane are critical of the naive assumption of nineteenth-century liberals that commerce breeds peace. A free-trade system, according to Keohane, provides incentives for cooperation but does not guarantee it. Here he is making an important distinction between cooperation and harmony. ‘Co-operation is not automatic’, Keohane argues, ‘but requires planning and negotiation’ (1986b: 11). In the following section we see how contemporary liberal thinking maintains that the institutions of world politics after 1945 successfully embedded all states into a cooperative order.
When applying liberal ideas to international relations today, we find two clusters of responses to the problems and possibilities posed by globalization.

The first alternative is that of the liberalism of privilege (Richardson 1997: 18). According to this perspective, the problems of globalization need to be addressed by a combination of strong democratic states in the core of the international system, robust regimes, and open markets and institutions. For an example of the working out of such a strategy in practice, we need to look no further than the success of the liberal hegemony of the post-1945 era. The US writer, G. John Ikenberry, is an articulate defender of this liberal order. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the USA took the opportunity to ‘embed’ certain fundamental liberal principles into the regulatory rules and institutions of international society. Most importantly, and contrary to realist thinking, the USA chose to forsake short-run gains in return for a durable settlement that benefited all states. According to Ikenberry, the USA signalled the cooperative basis of its power in a number of ways. First, in common with liberal democratic principles, the USA was an example to other members of international society in so far as its political system is open and allows different voices to be heard. Foreign policy, like domestic policy, is closely scrutinized by the media, public opinion, and political committees and opposition parties. Second, the USA advocated a global free-trade regime in accordance with the idea that free trade brings benefits to all participants (it also has the added advantage, from the hegemon’s point of view, of being cheap to manage). Third, the USA appeared to its allies at least as a reluctant hegemon that would not seek to exploit its significant power-political advantage. Fourth, and most importantly, the USA created and participated in a range of important international institutions that constrained its actions. The Bretton Woods system of economic and financial accords and the NATO security alliance are the best examples of the highly institutionalized character of American power in the post-1945 period.
Advocates of this liberal hegemonic order note wryly that it was so successful that allies were more worried about abandonment than about domination.

The post-1945 system of regulatory regimes and institutions has been successful in part due to the fact that they exist. In other words, once one set of institutional arrangements becomes embedded, it is very difficult for alternatives to make inroads. There are two implications that need to be teased out here. One is the narrow historical ‘window’ that exists for new institutional design; the other is the durability of existing institutions. ‘In terms of American hegemony, this means that, short of a major war or a global economic collapse, it is very difficult to envisage the type of historical breakpoint needed to replace the existing order’ (Ikenberry 1999: 137). One of the problems, Ikenberry would argue, with the liberal order of the twenty-first century is precisely that there has not been a breakpoint that has enabled a reconceptualization of world politics, such that new global powers such as China and India—and old unfulfilled ones such as Russia—feel satisfied with the balance of power and advantage in the world today.

Let us accept for a moment that the post-1945 international order has been successful and durable because US hegemony has been of a liberal character. The logic of this position is one in which the interests of all are identified with the interests of the USA and its Western allies. The challenge of managing international relations therefore becomes one where powerful states, and the institutions they dominate, are able to claim special rights and privileges over other members of international society. At the other end of the spectrum, the current order is highly unresponsive to the needs of weaker states and peoples. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the resulting global inequality is ‘grotesque’. One statistic is particularly graphic: the richest 20 per cent of the world’s population receives three-quarters of the world’s income, while the poorest 20 per cent receive only 1.5 per cent.

Given that liberalism has produced such unequal gains for the West and the rest, it is perhaps surprising that contemporary US-based liberal scholars have become obsessed with the question of preserving the current order rather than reconstituting it according to more just distributive principles. Rather than seeing reform as a task that wealthy Western countries have a responsibility to undertake, the use of Western power is more often equated with extending control of institutions, protecting markets and security access to precious resources. When this hegemonic liberal order comes under challenge, as it did on 9/11, the response is uncompromising. It is noticeable in this respect that former President George W. Bush mobilized the language of liberalism against Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and also Iraq. He referred to the 2003 war against Iraq as ‘freedom’s war’.

The potential for liberalism to embrace imperialism is a tendency that has a long history (Doyle 1986: 1151–69). We find in Machiavelli a number of arguments for the necessity for republics to expand. Liberty increases wealth and the concomitant drive for new markets; soldiers who are at the same time citizens are better fighters than slaves or mercenaries; and expansion is often the best means to promote a state’s security. In this sense, contemporary US foreign policy is no different from the great expansionist republican states of the pre-modern period such as Athens and Rome. Few liberals today would openly advocate territorial expansion along the lines of nineteenth-century European colonial powers; at the same time, many have been drawn to consider the virtues of empire as a way of delivering liberty in an insecure world. Even when empire is rejected by liberals such as Michael Doyle, their defence of interventionism in the affairs of non-liberal states suggests that the line between internationalism and imperialism is a very fine one. Doyle’s defence of democracy promotion by a policy mix of forcible and non-forcible instruments is featured in Box 6.4.

This strategy of preserving and extending liberal institutions is open to a number of criticisms. For the sake of simplicity, these will be gathered up into an alternative to the liberalism of privilege that we shall call radical liberalism. An opening objection made by proponents of the latter concerns the understanding of liberalism embodied in the neo-liberal defence of international institutions. The liberal character of those institutions is assumed rather than subjected to critical scrutiny. As a result, the incoherence of the purposes underpinning these institutions is often overlooked. The kind of economic liberalization advocated by Western financial institutions, particularly in economically impoverished countries, frequently comes into conflict with the norms of democracy and human rights. Three 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 that is so central to modern liberal forms of representative democracy (Hurrell and Woods 1995: 463).
Box 6.4 Defending and extending the liberal zone of peace

As we have seen, advocates of the democratic peace thesis believe 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 preserves 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 such as 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. Doyle categorizes these in terms of ‘inspiration’ (hoping that 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 with the warning that the march of liberalism will not necessarily 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)

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 liberty and political equality are frequently opposed. Third, the inflexible response of international financial institutions to various crises in the world economy has contributed to a backlash against liberalism per se. Richard Falk puts this dilemma starkly: there is, he argues, a tension between 'the ethical imperatives of the global neighbourhood and the dynamics of economic globalisation' (1995a: 573). Radical liberals argue that the hegemonic institutional order 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.

A second line of critique pursued by radical liberals concerns not so much the contradictory outcomes but the illiberal nature of the regimes and institutions. To put the point bluntly, there is a massive democratic deficit at the global level. Issues of international peace and security are determined by only 15 members of international society, of whom only five can exercise a power of veto. In other words, it is hypothetically possible for up to 200 states in the world to believe that military action ought to be taken but such an action would contravene the UN Charter if one of the permanent members were to cast a vote. If we take the area of political economy, the power exerted by the West and its international financial institutions perpetuates structural inequality. A good example here is the issue of free trade, which the West has pushed in areas where it gains from an open policy (such as in manufactured goods and financial services) but resisted in areas in which it stands to lose (agriculture and textiles). At a deeper level, radical liberals worry that all statist models of governance are undemocratic as elites are notoriously self-serving.

These sentiments underpin the approach to globalization taken by writers such as Danielle Archibugi, David Held, Mary Kaldor, and Jan Aart Scholte, among others, who believe that global politics must be democratized (Held and McGrew 2002). Held’s argument is illustrative of the analytical and prescriptive character of radical liberalism in an era of globalization. His diagnosis begins by revealing the inadequacies of the ‘Western liberal order’ (or the modern states-system, conventionally dated from the middle of the seventeenth century). During the latter stages of this period, we have witnessed rapid democratization in 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 that 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 conventions. 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 Western 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) that 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 or replacement of the UN with a genuinely democratic and accountable global parliament will be required. 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 that manage global politics.

Radical liberals place great importance on the civilizing capacity of global society. While the rule of law and the democratization of international institutions is a core component of the liberal project, it is also vital that citizens’ networks are broadened and deepened to monitor and cajole these institutions. These groups form a linkage between individuals, states, and global institutions. It is easy to portray radical liberal thinking as ‘utopian’, but we should not forget the many achievements of global civil society so far. 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 responsible for the heightened sensitivity to environmental degradation everywhere.

This emphasis on what Richard Falk calls ‘globalization from below’ is an important antidote to neo-liberalism’s somewhat status-quo-oriented worldview. But just as imperialism can emerge from a complacent liberalism of privilege, the danger for radical liberals is naivety. How is it that global institutions can be reformed in such a way that the voices of ordinary people will be heard? And what if the views of ‘peoples’ rather than ‘states’ turn out to be similarly indifferent to global injustice? There is a sense in which radical liberal thought wants to turn back the clock of globalization to an era in which markets were places where local producers exchanged products grown from their small-holdings or made by human labour. It is not clear that such a lifestyle is preferable to a world in which relatively inexpensive goods are produced in mechanized factories and bought in multinational supermarkets. Perhaps the least plausible aspect of the radical liberal project is the injunction to reform global capitalism. Just how much of a civilizing effect is global civil society able to exert upon the juggernaut of capitalism? And can this movement bridge the globalization divide in which democratic institutions are territorially located while forces of production and destruction are global?

**Key Points**

- The victor states in the wartime alliance against Nazi Germany pushed for a new international institution to be created: the United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco in June 1945 by 50 states. 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 that might be contrary to their interests.

- In the late twentieth century, the embedded liberalism of the post-1945 order has come under challenge. The ability of the USA to steer world order is diminishing, rising powers are wanting a greater share of the spoils, and new security challenges (weapons of mass destruction (WMD), climate change) have heightened the vulnerability of all peoples.

- In the context of globalization, there is merit in contrastising a liberalism of privilege with radical liberalism. The former seeks to restore the authority of Western states and the privileges they enjoy, while the latter believes that the liberal order can be sustainable only if it responds to the just demands of the excluded and the impoverished.

### Conclusion

The euphoria with which liberals greeted the end of the cold war in 1989 has been dissipated to a large extent by 9/11 and the war on terror. The pattern of conflict and insecurity that we have seen at the beginning of the twenty-first century suggests that liberal democracy remains at best an incomplete project. Images and narratives from countries in every continent—Afghanistan, Liberia, Chechnya, Colombia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and so on—remind us that in many parts of the world, antiliberal values of warlordism, torture, intolerance, and injustice are expressed daily. Moreover, the reasons why these states have failed can to some extent be laid at the door of liberalism, particularly in terms of its promotion

One response to the argument that liberalism is incomplete or under threat is to call for more liberalism. This is certainly the approach taken by G. John Ikenberry and his co-author Daniel Deudney (2009a, 2009b). They believe there is only one path to modernization, and that illiberal voices will be drowned out by the imperatives to open markets and hold governments accountable. A deeper reason for the crisis in liberalism is that it is bound up with an increasingly discredited Enlightenment view of the world. Contrary to the hopes of Bentham, Hume, Kant, Mill, and Paine, 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 argue that the universalizing mission of liberal values, such as democracy, capitalism, and secularism, undermines the traditions and practices of non-Western cultures (Gray 1995: 146). When it comes to doing intercultural politics, somehow liberals just don’t seem to take ‘no’ for an answer. The Marxist writer Immanuel Wallerstein has a nice way of expressing the dilemma over universalism. Liberals view it as a “gift” of the powerful to the weak that places them in a double bind: ‘to refuse the gift is to lose; to accept the gift is to lose’ (in Brown 1999).

At the outset, the chapter pointed to a tension within liberalism. The emphasis on personal liberty, unfettered trade, and the accumulation of property can contribute to a society riven with inequality, suspicion, and rivalry. Pulling in the opposite direction, liberalism contains within it a set of values that seek to provide for the conditions of a just society through democratic institutions and welfare-oriented economies. Projecting this tension on to a global stage leads to two possibilities for liberalism in an era of globalization. One variant is that relatively weak institutions try to respond to the challenge of coordinating the behaviour of states in a decentralized international order. In this world economic growth is unevenly distributed. As a consequence, preventive military action remains an ever-present possibility in order to deal with chaos and violence produced by dispossessed communities and networks. The more progressive model, advocated by radical liberals, seeks to heighten regulation through the strengthening of international institutions. This is to be done by making institutions more democratic and accountable for the negative consequences of globalization. The charge of utopianism is one that is easy to make against this position and hard to refute. In so doing, liberals of a radical persuasion should invoke Kant’s axiom that ‘ought’ must imply ‘can’.

Questions

1. Do you agree with Stanley Hoffmann that international affairs are ‘inhospitable’ to liberalism?
2. What arguments might one draw upon to support or refute this proposition?
3. Was the language of international morality, used by liberal idealists in the inter-war period, a way of masking the interests of Britain and France in maintaining their dominance of the international system after the First World War?
4. Should liberal states promote their values abroad? Is force a legitimate instrument in securing this goal?
5. How much progress (if any) has there been in liberal thinking on international relations since Kant?
6. Are democratic peace theorists right, but for the wrong reasons?
7. Which strategy of dealing with globalization do you find more convincing: the one that holds that states and institutions should maintain the current order or the one that supports reform driven by global civil society?
8. Is there a fundamental tension at the heart of liberalism between liberty and democracy? If so, how is this tension played out in the international domain?
9. Are liberal values and institutions in the contemporary international system as deeply embedded as neo-liberals claim?
10. Is the liberal order in crisis today, as G. John Ikenberry argues? Are emerging global powers a threat to the liberal order?
Further Reading

Liberalism in International Relations


Richardson, J. L. (1997), ‘Contending Liberalisms: Past and Present’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 3(1): 5–33. A thorough overview of liberalism in political thought and in IR. Parts of the argument in this chapter mirror Richardson’s article.


Liberalism in American and British foreign policy


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Chapter 7

Contemporary mainstream approaches: neo-realism and neo-liberalism

STEVEN L. LAMY
Reader's Guide

This chapter reviews the core assumptions of neo-realist and neo-liberalism and explores the debate between these intellectual siblings that has dominated mainstream academic scholarship in International Relations (IR) in the USA. Realism and neo-realism, and to some extent neo-liberalism, have also had a profound impact on US foreign policy. Neo-realists dominate the world of security studies and neo-liberals focus on political economy and more recently on issues such as human rights and the environment. These theories do not offer starkly contrasting images of the world. Neo-realists state that they are concerned with issues of survival. They claim that neo-liberals are too optimistic about the possibilities for cooperation among states. Neo-liberals counter with claims that all states have mutual interests and can gain from cooperation. Both are normative theories of a sort, biased towards the state, the capitalist market, and the status quo. The processes of globalization have forced neo-realists and neo-liberals to consider similar issues and address new challenges to international order. In the introduction, I discuss the various versions of neo-liberalism and neo-realism, and ask the reader to consider how theory shapes our image of the world. Each theory represents an attempt by scholars to offer a better explanation for the behaviour of states and to describe the nature of international politics. Similarly, the more policy-relevant versions of these theories prescribe competing policy agendas. The next section reviews three versions of neo-realism: Waltz's structural realism; Grieco's neo-realism or modern realism, with its focus on absolute and relative gains; and what security scholars call offensive and defensive realism or neo-realism. The third section of the chapter reviews the assumptions of neo-liberal institutionalist perspectives. The fourth section focuses on the 'neo-neo debate'. This is a debate that many US scholars think is the most important intellectual issue in IR today. Many other scholars see it as not much of a debate at all. It is a debate about refining common assumptions and about the future role and effectiveness of international institutions and the possibilities of cooperation. However, it is not a debate between mainstream and critical perspectives. It is a debate between 'rule-makers' and it leaves out the voices on the margins, those of the 'rule-takers'. In the fifth section of the chapter, I review how neo-realists and neo-liberal thinkers react to the processes of globalization. The chapter concludes with a suggestion that we are only seeing part of the world if we limit our studies to the neo-perspectives and the neo-neo debate.
Introduction

The debate between neo-realists and neo-liberals has dominated mainstream international relations scholarship in the USA since the mid-1980s. Two of the major US journals in the field, *International Organization* and *International Security*, are dominated by articles that address the relative merits of each theory and its value in explaining the world of international politics. Neo-realism and neo-liberalism are the progeny of realism and liberalism respectively. They are more than theories; they are paradigms or conceptual frameworks that define a field of study, and define an agenda for research and policy-making. As previous chapters on liberalism (Ch. 6) and realism (Ch. 5) have suggested, there are many versions and interpretations of each paradigm or theory. Some realists are more ‘hard-line’ on issues such as defence or participation in international agreements, while other realists take more accommodating positions on these same issues. The previous chapter on liberalism provides a useful description of the varieties of this theory, and this chapter will explore those that have the greatest impact on academic discourse in the USA and on the people who develop US foreign policy. This chapter will also show the considerable differences in how the scholarly and policy world define and use the labels neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

For most academics, neo-realism refers to Kenneth Waltz’s Theory of International Politics (1979). Waltz’s theory emphasizes the importance of the structure of the international system and its role as the primary determinant of state behaviour. Yet most scholars and policy-makers use neo-realism to describe a recent or updated version of realism. Recently, in the area of security studies, some scholars use the terms offensive and defensive realism when discussing the current version of realism; or neo-realism (see Ch. 5).

In the academic world, neo-liberal generally refers to neo-liberal institutionalism, or what is now called institutional theory by those writing in this theoretical domain. However, in the policy world, neo-liberalism means something different. A neo-liberal foreign policy promotes free trade or open markets and Western democratic values and institutions. Most of the leading Western states have joined the US-led chorus, calling for the ‘enlargement’ of the community of democratic and capitalist nations. There is no other game in town; the financial and political institutions created after the Second World War have survived, and these provide the foundation for current political and economic power arrangements.

In reality, neo-liberal foreign policies tend not to be as wedded to the ideals of democratic peace, free trade, and open borders. National interests take precedence over morality and universal ideals, and, much to the dismay of traditional realists, economic interests are given priority over geopolitical ones.

For students beginning their study of International Relations (IR), these labels and contending definitions can be confusing and frustrating. Yet, as you have learned in reading previous chapters in this volume, understanding these perspectives and theories is the only way you can hope to understand and explain how leaders and citizens alike see the world and respond to issues and events. This understanding may be more important when discussing neo-realism and neo-liberalism because they represent dominant perspectives in the policy world and in the US academic community.

There are clear differences between neo-realism and neo-liberalism; however, these differences should not be exaggerated. Robert Keohane (in Baldwin 1993), a neo-liberal institutionalist, has stated that neo-liberal institutionalism borrows equally from realism and liberalism. Both theories represent status-quo perspectives and are what Robert Cox calls problem-solving theories (see Ch. 10). This means that both neo-realism and neo-liberalism address issues and problems that could disrupt the status quo, namely, the issues of security, conflict, and cooperation.

Neither theory advances prescriptions for major reform or radical transformation of the international system. Rather, they are system maintainer theories, meaning that adherents are generally satisfied with the current international system and its actors, values, and power arrangements. These theories address different sets of issues. In general, neo-realist theory focuses on issues of military security and war. Neo-liberal theorists focus on issues of cooperation, international political economy, and, most recently, the environment. For neo-liberal institutionalists, the core question for research is how to promote and support cooperation in an anarchic and competitive international system. For neo-realists, the core research question is how to survive in this system.

A review of the assumptions of each theory and an analysis of the contending positions in the so-called neo-neo debate and a discussion of how neo-liberals and neo-realists react to the processes of globalization follows.
Key Points

- The neo-neo debate has been the dominant focus in international relations theory scholarship in the USA for the last 10-15 years.
- More than just theories, neo-realism and neo-liberalism represent paradigms or conceptual frameworks that shape individuals’ images of the world and influence research priorities and policy debates and choices.
- There are several versions of neo-realism or neo-liberalism.
- Neo-liberalism in the academic world refers most often to neo-liberal institutionalism. In the policy world, neo-liberalism is identified with the promotion of capitalism and Western democratic values and institutions.
- Rational-choice approaches and game theory have been integrated into neo-realist and neo-liberal theory to explain policy choices and the behaviour of states in conflict and cooperative situations.
- Neo-realist and neo-liberal theories are status-quo-oriented problem-solving theories. They share many assumptions about actors, values, issues, and power arrangements in the international system. Neo-realist and neo-liberalists study different worlds. Neo-realist study security issues and are concerned with issues of power and survival. Neo-liberals study political economy and focus on cooperation and institutions.

Neo-realism

Kenneth Waltz’s theory of structural realism is only one version of neo-realism. A second group of neo-realist, represented by the scholarly contributions of Joseph Grieco (1988a and 1988b), have integrated Waltz’s ideas with the ideas of more traditional realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffmann, and Robert Gilpin, to construct a contemporary or modern realist profile. A third version of neo-realism is found in security studies. Here scholars talk about offensive and defensive realists. These versions of neo-realism are briefly reviewed in the next few pages.

Structural realism

Waltz’s neo-realism is distinctive from traditional or classical realism in a number of ways. First, realism is primarily an inductive theory. For example, Hans Morgenthau would explain international politics by looking at the actions and interactions of the states in the system. Thus, the decision by Pakistan and India to test nuclear weapons could be explained by looking at the influence of military leaders in both states and the longstanding differences compounded by their geographic proximity. All these explanations are unit or bottom-up explanations. Neo-realists, such as Waltz, do not deny the importance of unit-level explanations; however, they believe that the effects of structure must be considered. According to Waltz, structure is defined by the ordering principle of the international system, which is anarchy, and the distribution of capabilities across units, which are states. Waltz also assumes that there is no differentiation of function between different units.

The structure of the international system shapes all foreign policy choices. For a neo-realist, a better explanation for India and Pakistan’s nuclear testing would be anarchy or the lack of a common power or central authority to enforce rules and maintain order in the system. In a competitive system, this condition creates a need for weapons to survive. Additionally, in an anarchic system, states with greater power tend to have greater influence.

A second difference between traditional realists and Waltz’s neo-realism is found in their view of power. To realists, power is an end in itself. States use power to gain more power and thus increase their influence and ability to secure their national interests. Although traditional realists recognize different elements of power (for example, economic resources and technology), military power is considered the most obvious element of a state’s power. Waltz would not agree with those who say that military force is not as essential as it once was as a tool of statecraft. As recent conflicts in Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka suggest, many leaders still believe that they can resolve their differences by force.

For neo-realists, power is more than the accumulation of military resources and the ability to use this power to coerce and control other states in the system. Waltz and other neo-realists see power as the combined capabilities of a state. States are differentiated in the system by their power and not by their function. Power gives a state a place or position in the international system and that shapes the state’s behaviour. During the cold war, the USA and the USSR were positioned as the
only two superpowers. Neo-realists would say that such positioning explains the similarities in their behaviour. The distribution of power and any dramatic changes in that distribution of power help to explain the structure of the international system. Specifically, states will seek to maintain their position or placement in the system.

The end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Empire upset the balance of power and, in the eyes of many neo-realists, increased uncertainty and instability in the international system. Waltz concurs with traditional realists when he states that the central mechanism for order in the system is balance of power.

The renewed emphasis on the importance of the United Nations and NATO and their interventions in crisis areas around the world may be indicative of the major powers' current search for order in the international system. Waltz would challenge neo-liberal institutionalists who believe that we can manage the processes of globalization merely by building effective international institutions (see Case Study). He would argue that their effectiveness depends on the support of major powers.

A third difference between realism and Waltz's neo-realism is each one's view on how states react to the condition of anarchy. To realists, anarchy is a condition of the system, and states react to it according to their size, location, domestic politics, and leadership qualities. In contrast, neo-realists suggest that anarchy defines the system. Further, all states are functionally similar units, meaning that they all experience the same constraints presented by anarchy and strive to maintain concentrations of chemicals that could paralyse a person's nervous system and could kill. When the Amsterdam waste disposal company raised its price because of this danger, the Probo Koala was allowed to take back its waste and sailed for Estonia to pick up Russian oil products and then continue to Western Africa.

Officials from Traficura notified Ivorian officials that the ship was carrying toxic wastes, but they were still allowed to land in Abidjan. Both company officials and the government of the Ivory Coast were well aware that there were no facilities in Abidjan for properly disposing of this waste. The Ivorian company, Tommy, hired tanker trucks that were loaded with the toxic wastes from the Probo Koala. During the night, the tankers dumped their loads in eighteen areas around the city of Abidjan.

The disposal and dumping of toxic wastes is a global problem. As environmental regulations in the North become more stringent, corporations move to the South for dumping. Wastes follow the path of least resistance—global corporations look for countries with weak laws and without the capacity or will to enforce any national or international laws aimed at regulating the waste disposal market. Who is responsible for this problem? How should it be managed? Neoliberal institutionalists believe that we can establish regimes or governing arrangements to manage trade in toxic wastes and prevent illegal dumping. In fact, a previous dumping incident in Koko, Nigeria, was a catalyst for a conference and treaty to govern the transnational movement of toxic wastes. At the Basel convention in 1989, the global South wanted an absolute ban on all toxic waste trade and the global North lobbied for a much weaker treaty. The first version of this treaty was ratified in 1992 and revisions in 1994 and 1998 have essentially banned the export of hazardous waste from North to South. Yet enforcement depends on the cooperation of citizens, global corporations, and governments at all levels. At the time this was considered a victory for the poor and advocates for environmental justice and human security for all. Unfortunately, the Ivy Coast case shows how difficult it is to manage the processes of globalization and to control those individuals who place profits over the well-being of people.

(For more information: Basel Action Network, <www.ban.org>)
their position in the system. Neo-realists explain any differences in policy by differences in power or capabilities. Both Belgium and China recognize that one of the constraints of anarchy is the need for security to protect their national interests. Leaders in these countries may select different policy paths to achieve that security. A small country such as Belgium, with limited resources, responds to anarchy and the resulting security dilemma by joining alliances and taking an activist role in regional and international organizations, seeking to control the arms race. China, a major power and a large country, would most likely pursue a unilateral strategy of increasing military strength to protect and secure its interests.

**Security studies and neo-realism**

Recently, security studies scholars, primarily in the USA, have suggested a more nuanced version of a realism that reflects their interests in understanding the nature of the security threats presented by the international system and the strategy options that states must pursue to survive and prosper in the system. These two versions of neo-realism, offensive and defensive realism (many scholars in this area prefer to be called modern realists and not neo-realists), are more policy-relevant than Waltz and Grieco’s version of neo-realism, and thus may be seen as more prescriptive than the other versions (Jervis 1999).

Offensive neo-realists appear to accept most of Waltz’s ideas and a good portion of the assumptions of traditional realism. Defensive neo-realists suggest that our assumptions of relations with other states depend on whether they are friends or enemies. When dealing with friends such as the European Union, the assumptions governing US leaders are more akin to those promoted by neo-liberals. However, there is little difference between defensive and offensive neo-realists when they are dealing with expansionary or pariah states, or traditional enemies.

John Mearsheimer (1990, 1994/5), an offensive realist in security studies, suggests that relative power and not absolute power is most important to states. He suggests that leaders of countries should pursue security policies that weaken their potential enemies and increase their power relative to all others. In this era of globalization, the incompatibility of states’ goals and interests enhances the competitive nature of an anarchic system and makes conflict as inevitable as cooperation. Thus

**Relative and absolute gains**

Joseph Grieco (1988a) is one of several realist/neo-realist scholars who focuses on the concepts of relative and absolute gains. Grieco claims that states are interested in increasing their power and influence (absolute gains) and, thus, will cooperate with other states or actors in the system to increase their capabilities. However, Grieco claims that states are also concerned with how much power and influence other states might achieve (relative gains) in any cooperative endeavour. This situation can be used to show a key difference between neo-liberals and neo-realists. Neo-liberals claim that cooperation does not work when states fail to follow the rules and ‘cheat’ to secure their national interests. Neo-realists claim that there are two barriers to international cooperation: cheating and the relative gains of other actors. Further, when states fail to comply with rules that encourage cooperation, other states may abandon multilateral activity and act unilaterally.

The likelihood of states abandoning international cooperative efforts is increased if participants see other states gaining more from the arrangement. If states agree to a ban on the production and use of landmines, all the signatories to the treaty will be concerned about compliance. Institutions will be established to enforce the treaty. Neo-realists argue that leaders must be vigilant for cheaters and must focus on those states that could gain a military advantage when this weapons system is removed. In some security situations, landmines may be the only effective deterrent against a neighbouring state with superior land forces. In this situation, the relative gains issue is one of survival. In a world of uncertainty and competition, the fundamental question, according to Grieco and others who share his view of neo-realism, is not whether all parties gain from the cooperation, but who will gain more if we cooperate?

**Box 7.1 Core assumptions of neo-realists**

- States and other actors interact in an anarchic environment. This means that there is no central authority to enforce rules and norms or protect the interests of the larger global community.
- The structure of the system is a major determinant of actor behaviour.
- States are self-interest-oriented, and an anarchic and competitive system pushes them to favour self-help over cooperative behaviour.
- States are rational actors, selecting strategies to maximize benefits and minimize losses.
- The most critical problem presented by anarchy is survival.
- States see all other states as potential enemies and threats to their national security. This distrust and fear creates a security dilemma, and this motivates the policies of most states.
talk of reducing military budgets at the end of the cold war was considered by offensive neo-realists to be pure folly. Leaders must always be prepared for an expansionary state that will challenge the global order. Moreover, if the major powers begin a campaign of disarmament and reduce their power relative to other states, they are simply inviting these expansionary states to attack.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2003) were critical of the decision by George W. Bush to go to war in Iraq. They argue that the Bush administration ‘inflated the threat’ by misleading the world about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its links to terrorists who might attack the USA in the future.

More importantly for security neo-realists, this war was unnecessary because the containment of Iraq was working effectively and there was no ‘compelling strategic rationale’ for this war. The war with Iraq will cost the USA billions of dollars, and it has already required a tremendous commitment of US military forces. With Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terrorism, the US military is over-extended. The unilateralism of the Bush administration concerned both offensive and defensive neo-realists because it hurts the absolute and relative power of the USA.

Defensive neo-realists Robert Jervis (1999) and Jack Snyder (1991) claim that most leaders understand that the costs of war clearly outweigh the benefits. The use of military force for conquest and expansion is a security strategy that most leaders reject in this age of complex interdependence and globalization. War remains a tool of statecraft for some; however, most wars are seen by citizens and leaders alike to be caused by irrational or dysfunctional forces within a society, such as excessive militarism or ethnonationalism.

Defensive neo-realists are often confused with neo-liberals. Although they have some sympathy for the neo-liberal argument that war can be avoided by creating security institutions (for example, alliances or arms control treaties) that diminish the security dilemma and provide mutual security for participating states, they do not see institutions as the most effective way to prevent all wars. Most believe that conflict is simply unavoidable in some situations. First, aggressive and expansionary states do exist and they challenge world order and, second, simply in pursuit of their national interests, some states may make conflict with others unavoidable.

Defensive neo-realists are more optimistic than are offensive neo-realists. However, they are considerably less optimistic than neo-liberals for several reasons (Jervis 1999). First, defensive neo-realists see conflict as unnecessary only in a subset of situations (for example, economic relations). Second, leaders can never be certain that an aggressive move by a state (for example, support for a revolutionary movement in a neighbouring state) is an expansionary action intended to challenge the existing order or simply a preventive policy aimed at protecting their security. Third, defensive realists challenge the neo-liberal view that it is relatively easy to find areas where national interests might converge and become the basis for cooperation and institution building. Although they recognize that areas of common or mutual interests exist, defensive neo-realists are concerned about non-compliance or cheating by states, especially in security policy areas.

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### Key Points

- Kenneth Waltz’s structural realism has had a major impact on scholars in International Relations. Waltz claims that the structure of the international system is the key factor in shaping the behaviour of states. Waltz’s neo-realism also expands our view of power and capabilities. However, he agrees with traditional realists when he states that major powers still determine the nature of the international system.
- Structural realists recognize national attributes as determinants of a state’s foreign policy behaviour. To these neo-realists, all states are functionally similar units, experiencing the same constraints presented by anarchy.
- Structural realists accept many assumptions of traditional realism. They believe that force remains an important and effective tool of statecraft, and balance of power is still the central mechanism for order in the system.
- Joseph Grieco represents a group of neo-realists or modern realists who are critical of neo-liberal institutionalists who claim that states are mainly interested in absolute gains. Grieco claims that all states are interested in both absolute and relative gains. How gains are distributed is an important issue. Thus there are two barriers to international cooperation: fear of those who might not follow the rules and the relative gains of others.
- Scholars in security studies present two versions of neo-realism or modern realism. Offensive neo-realists emphasize the importance of relative power. Like traditional realists, they believe that conflict is inevitable in the international system and leaders must always be wary of expansionary powers. Defensive realists are often confused with neo-liberal institutionalists. They recognize the costs of war and assume that it usually results from irrational forces in a society. However, they admit that expansionary states willing to use military force make it impossible to live in a world without weapons. Cooperation is possible, but it is more likely to succeed in relations with friendly states.
Neo-liberalism

As the previous chapter on liberalism indicates, there are a number of versions of the theory and all have their progeny in contemporary neo-liberal debates. David Baldwin (1993) identified four varieties of liberalism that influence contemporary international relations: commercial, republican, sociological, and liberal institutionalism.

The first, commercial liberalism, advocates free trade and a market or capitalist economy as the way towards peace and prosperity. Today, this view is promoted by global financial institutions, most of the major trading states, and multinational corporations. The neo-liberal orthodoxy is championed by popular authors like Thomas Friedman (2005), and argues that free trade, private property rights, and free markets will lead to a richer, more innovative, and more tolerant world. Republican liberalism states that democratic states are more inclined to respect the rights of their citizens and are less likely to go to war with their democratic neighbours. In current scholarship, this view is presented as democratic peace theory. These two forms of liberalism, commercial and republican, have been combined to form the core foreign policy goals of many of the world’s major powers.

In sociological liberalism, the notion of community and the process of interdependence are important elements. As transnational activities increase, people in distant lands are linked and their governments become more interdependent. As a result, it becomes more difficult and more costly for states to act unilaterally to avoid cooperation with neighbours. The cost of war or other deviant behaviour increases for all states and, eventually, a peaceful international community is built. Many of the assumptions of sociological liberalism are represented in the current globalization literature dealing with popular culture and civil society.

Liberal institutionalism or neo-liberal institutionalism is considered by many scholars to present the most convincing challenge to realist and neo-realist thinking. The roots of this version of neo-liberalism are found in the functional integration scholarship of the 1940s and the 1950s, and regional integration studies of the 1960s. These studies suggest that the way towards peace and prosperity is to have independent states pool their resources and even surrender some of their sovereignty to create integrated communities to promote economic growth or respond to regional problems (see Ch. 26). The European Union is one such institution that began as a regional community for encouraging multilateral cooperation in the production of coal and steel. Proponents of integration and community building were motivated to challenge dominant realist thinking because of the experiences of the two world wars. Rooted in liberal thinking, integration theories promoted after the Second World War were less idealistic and more pragmatic than the liberal institutionalism that dominated policy debates after the First World War.

The third generation of liberal institutional scholarship was the transnationalism and complex interdependence of the 1970s (Keohane and Nye 1972, 1977). Theorists in these camps presented arguments that suggested the world had become more pluralistic in terms of actors involved in international interactions and that these actors had become more dependent on each other. Complex interdependence presented a world with four characteristics: (1) increasing linkages among states and non-state actors; (2) a new agenda of international issues with no distinction between low and high politics; (3) a recognition of multiple channels for interaction among actors across national boundaries; and (4) the decline of the efficacy of military force as a tool of statecraft. Complex interdependence scholars would suggest that globalization represents an increase in linkages and channels for interaction, as well as in the number of interconnections.

Neo-liberal institutionalism or institutional theory shares many of the assumptions of neo-realism. However, its adherents claim that neo-realists focus excessively on conflict and competition, and minimize the chances for cooperation even in an anarchic international system. Neo-liberal institutionalists see ‘institutions’ as the mediator and the means to achieve cooperation among actors in the system. Currently, neo-liberal institutionalists are focusing their research on issues of global governance and the creation and maintenance of institutions associated with managing the processes of globalization.

For neo-liberal institutionalists, the focus on mutual interests extends beyond trade and development issues. With the end of the cold war, states were forced to address new security concerns like the threat of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and an increasing number of internal conflicts that threatened regional and global security. Graham Allison (2000) states that one of the consequences of the globalization
of security concerns such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and pandemics like HIV/AIDS is the realization that threats to any country’s security cannot be addressed unilaterally. Successful responses to security threats require the creation of regional and global regimes that promote cooperation among states and the coordination of policy responses to these new security threats.

Robert Keohane (2002b) suggests that one result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the USA was the creation of a very broad coalition against terrorism, involving a large number of states and key global and regional institutions. Neo-liberals support cooperative multilateralism and are generally critical of the pre-emptive and unilateral use of force previously condoned in the 2002 Bush doctrine. Still, in the policy world, the Obama administration has made it a priority to re-establish US leadership in reforming institutions of global governance. This administration places an emphasis on multilateralism and sees the USA as a builder of world order and as a partner in global problem solving. The priority given to global cooperation and multilateralism was evident in President Obama’s work with the G20 to address the global economic crisis and his diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement at the climate talks in Copenhagen. The President’s commitment to regional and global institutions was clearly expressed in Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech:

Peace requires responsibility. Peace entails sacrifice. That is why NATO continues to be indispensable. That is why we must strengthen UN and regional peacekeeping, and not leave the task to a few countries. (http://nobelprize.org)

Most neo-liberals would believe that the US-led war with Iraq did more to undermine the legitimacy and influence of global and regional security institutions that operated so successfully in the first Gulf War (1990–1) and continue to work effectively in Afghanistan. The Obama administration has made it clear that the USA cannot and will not act alone.

The core assumptions of neo-liberal institutionalists include:

- States are key actors in international relations, but not the only significant actors. States are rational or instrumental actors, always seeking to maximize their interests in all issue-areas.
- In this competitive environment, states seek to maximize absolute gains through cooperation. Rational behaviour leads states to see value in cooperative behaviour. States are less concerned with gains or advantages achieved by other states in cooperative arrangements.

- The greatest obstacle to successful cooperation is non-compliance or cheating by states.
- Cooperation is never without problems, but states will shift loyalty and resources to institutions if these are seen as mutually beneficial and if they provide states with increasing opportunities to secure their international interests.

The neo-liberal institutional perspective is more relevant in issue-areas where states have mutual interests. For example, most world leaders believe that we shall all benefit from an open trade system, and many support trade rules that protect the environment. Institutions have been created to manage international behaviour in both areas. The neo-liberal view may have less relevance in areas in which states have no mutual interests. Thus cooperation in military or national security areas, where someone’s gain is perceived as someone else’s loss (a zero-sum perspective), may be more difficult to achieve.

### Key Points

- Contemporary neo-liberalism has been shaped by the assumptions of commercial, republican, sociological, and institutional liberalism.
- Commercial and republican liberalism provide the foundation for current neo-liberal thinking in Western governments. These countries promote free trade and democracy in their foreign policy programmes.
- Neo-liberal institutionalism, the other side of the neo–neo debate, is rooted in the functional integration theoretical work of the 1950s and 1960s, and the complex interdependence and transnational studies literature of the 1970s and 1980s.
- Neo-liberal institutionalists see institutions as the mediator and the means to achieve cooperation in the international system. Regimes and institutions help govern a competitive and anarchic international system, and they encourage, and at times require, multilateralism and cooperation as a means of securing national interests.
- Neo-liberal institutionalists recognize that cooperation may be harder to achieve in areas where leaders perceive they have no mutual interests.
- Neo-liberals believe that states cooperate to achieve absolute gains, and the greatest obstacle to cooperation is 'cheating' or non-compliance by other states.
The neo-neo debate

By now it should be clear that the neo-neo debate is not particularly contentious, nor is the intellectual difference between the two theories significant. As was suggested earlier in the chapter, neo-realists and neo-liberals share an epistemology; they focus on similar questions and agree on a number of assumptions about man, the state, and the international system. A summary of the major points of contention is presented in Box 7.2.

**Box 7.2 The main features of the neo-realist/neoliberal debate**

1. Both agree that the international system is anarchic. Neo-realists say that anarchism puts more constraints on foreign policy and that neo-liberals minimize the importance of survival as the goal of each state. Neo-liberals claim that neo-realists minimize the importance of international interdependence, globalization, and the regimes created to manage these interactions.

2. Neo-realists believe that international cooperation will not happen unless states make it happen. They feel that it is hard to achieve, difficult to maintain, and dependent on state power. Neo-liberals believe that cooperation is easy to achieve in areas where states have mutual interests.

3. Neo-liberals think that actors with common interests try to maximize absolute gains. Neo-realists claim that neo-liberals overlook the importance of relative gains. Neo-liberals want to maximize the total amount of gains for all parties involved, whereas neo-realists believe that the fundamental goal of states in cooperative relationships is to prevent others from gaining more.

4. Neo-realists state that anarchy requires states to be preoccupied with relative power, security, and survival in a competitive international system. Neo-liberals are more concerned with economic welfare or international political economy issues and other non-military issue areas such as international environmental concerns.

5. Neo-realists emphasize the capabilities (power) of states over the intentions and interests of states. Capabilities are essential for security and independence. Neo-realists claim that uncertainty about the intentions of other states forces states to focus on their capabilities. Neo-liberals emphasize intentions and preferences.

6. Neo-liberals see institutions and regimes as significant forces in international relations. Neo-realists state that neo-liberals exaggerate the impact of regimes and institutions on state behaviour. Neo-liberals claim that they facilitate cooperation, and neo-realists say that they do not mitigate the constraining effects of anarchy on cooperation.

(Adapted from Baldwin 1993: 4–8)

If anything, the current neo-liberal institutionalist literature appears to try hard to prove that its adherents are a part of the neo-realist/realist family. As Robert Jervis (1999: 43) states, there is not much of a gap between the two theories. As evidence of this, he quotes Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin (1999: 3): ‘for better or worse institutional theory is a half-sibling of neo-realism’.

The following section reviews key aspects of this debate. With regard to anarchism, the theories share several assumptions. First, they agree that anarchism means that there is no common authority to enforce any rules or laws constraining the behaviour of states or other actors. Neo-liberal institutionalists and neo-realists agree that anarchism encourages states to act unilaterally and to promote self-help behaviour. The condition of anarchism also makes cooperation more difficult to achieve. However, neo-realists tend to be more pessimistic and to see the world as much more competitive and conflictive. Neo-realists see international relations as a struggle for survival, and in every interaction there is a chance of a loss of power to a future competitor or enemy. Neo-liberal institutionalists recognize the competitive nature of international relations. However, the opportunities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest may mitigate the effects of anarchism.

Some scholars suggest that the real difference between the neos is that they study different worlds. The neo-liberal institutionalists focus their scholarship on political economy, the environment, and human rights issues. Neo-liberals work in what we once called the low politics arena, issues related to human security and the good life. Their assumptions work better in these issue-areas.

Neo-realists tend to dominate the security studies area. Neo-realist scholars study issues of international security or what was once called high politics issues. Many neo-realists assume that what distinguishes the study of international relations from political science is the emphasis on issues of survival.

For neo-liberal institutionalists, foreign policy is now about managing complex interdependence and the various processes of globalization. It is also about responding to problems that threaten the economic well-being, if not the survival, of people around the world. Foreign policy leaders must find ways to manage financial markets so that the gap between rich and poor does not become insurmountable. These same leaders must find
ways to deal with toxic waste dumping that threatens clean water supplies in developing states. The anodyne for neo-liberal institutionalists is to create institutions to manage issue-areas where states have mutual interests. Creating, maintaining, and further empowering these institutions is the future of foreign policy for neo-liberal institutionalists.

Neo-realists take a more state-centric view of foreign policy. They recognize international relations as a world of cooperation and conflict. However, close to their traditional realist roots, neo-realists see foreign policy as dominated by issues of national security and survival. The most effective tool of statecraft is still force or the threat of force and, even in these times of globalization, states must continue to look after their own interests. All states, in the language of the neo-realists, are egoistic value maximizers.

Neo-realists accept the existence of institutions and regimes, and recognize their role as tools or instruments of statecraft. From a neo-realist view, states work to establish these regimes and institutions if they serve their interests (absolute gain), and they continue to support these same regimes and institutions if the cooperative activities promoted by the institution do not unfairly advantage other states (relative gains). Neo-realists also would agree that institutions can shape the content and direction of foreign policy in certain issue-areas and when the issue at hand is not central to the security interests of a given state.

Neo-liberals agree that, once established, institutions can do more than shape or influence the foreign policy of states. Institutions can promote a foreign policy agenda by providing critical information and expertise. Institutions also may facilitate policy-making and encourage more cooperation at local, national, and international levels. They often serve as a catalyst for coalition building among state and non-state actors. Recent work on environmental institutions suggests that they can promote changes in national policies and actually encourage both national and international policies that address environmental problems (Haas, Keohane, and Levy 1993).

A major issue of contention in the debate is the notion that institutions have become significant in international relations. Further, they can make a difference by helping to resolve global and regional problems and encourage cooperation rather than conflict. Neo-liberal institutionalists expect an increase in the number of institutions and an increase in cooperative behaviour. They predict that these institutions will have a greater role in managing the processes of globalization and that states will come to the point where they realize that acting unilaterally or limiting cooperative behaviour will not lead to the resolution or management of critical global problems. Ultimately, neo-liberal institutionalists claim that the significance of these institutions as players in the game of international politics will increase substantially.

Neo-realists recognize that these institutions are likely to become more significant in areas of mutual interest, where national security interests are not at stake. However, the emphasis that states place on relative gains will limit the growth of institutions and will always make cooperation difficult. For neo-realists, the important question is not: will we all gain from this cooperation, but who will gain more?

What is left out of the debate?

One could argue that the neo-neo debate leaves out a great number of issues. Perhaps with a purpose, it narrows the agenda of international relations. It is not a debate about some of the most critical questions, such as "Why war?" or "Why inequality in the international system?" Remember that this is a debate that occurs within the mainstream of International Relations (IR) scholarship. Neo-realists and neo-liberal institutionalists agree on the questions; they simply offer different responses. Some important issues are left out and assumptions about international politics may be overlooked. As a student of IR, you should be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a theory. Let us consider three possible areas for discussion: the role of domestic politics, learning, and political globalization.

Both theories assume that states are value maximizers and that anarchy constrains the behaviour of states. But what about domestic forces that might promote a more cooperative strategy to address moral or ethical issues? Neo-realist assumptions suggest a sameness in foreign policy that may not be true. How do we account for the moral dimensions of foreign policy such as development assistance given to poor states that have no strategic or economic value to the donor? Or how do we explain domestic interests that promote isolationist policies in the USA at a time when system changes would suggest that international activism might result in both absolute and relative gains? We may need to challenge Waltz and ask if the internal make-up of a state matters. All politics is now glocal (global and local) and neo-realists especially, but also neo-liberals, must pay attention to what goes on inside a state. Issues of political culture, identity, and domestic political games must be considered.
We must assume that leaders and citizens alike learn something from their experiences. The lessons of two world wars prompted Europeans to set aside issues of sovereignty and nationalism and build an economic community. Although some neo-liberal institutionalists recognize the importance of learning, in general neither theory explores the possibility that states will learn and may shift from a traditional self-interest perspective to an emphasis on common interests. There may be a momentum to cooperation and institution building that both theories underestimate. Can we assume that institutions and cooperation have had some impact on conditions of anarchy?

Both neo-realist and neo-liberals neglect the possibility that political activities may be shifting away from the state. A number of scholars have suggested that one of the most significant outcomes of globalization is the emergence of global or transnational political advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Institutions promoted primarily by these advocacy networks have had a major impact on human rights and human security issues.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>* The neo-neo debate is not a debate between two polar opposite worldviews. They share an epistemology, focus on similar questions, and agree on a number of assumptions about international politics. This is an intra-paradigm debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Neo-liberal institutionalists and neo-realists study different worlds of international politics. Neo-realists focus on security and military issues. Neo-liberal institutionalists focus on political economy, environmental issues, and, lately, human rights issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Neo-realists explain that all states must be concerned with the absolute and relative gains that result from international agreements and cooperative efforts. Neo-liberal institutionalists are less concerned about relative gains and consider that all will benefit from absolute gains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Neo-realists are more cautious about cooperation and remind us that the world is still a competitive place where self-interest rules.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Neo-liberal institutionalists believe that states and other actors can be persuaded to cooperate if they are convinced that all states will comply with rules, and that cooperation will result in absolute gains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* This debate does not discuss many important issues that challenge some of the core assumptions of each theory. For example, neo-realism cannot explain foreign policy behaviour that challenges the norm of national interest over human interests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Globalization has contributed to a shift in political activity away from the state. Transnational social movements have forced states to address critical international issues and in several situations have supported the establishment of institutions that promote further cooperation, and fundamentally challenge the power of states.</td>
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### Neo-liberals and neo-realists on globalization

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, most neo-realists do not think that globalization changes the game of international politics much at all. States might require more resources and expertise to maintain their sovereignty, but neo-realists think most evidence suggests that states are increasing their expenditures and their jurisdictions over a wide variety of areas. Ultimately, we still all look to the state to solve the problems we face, and the state still has a monopoly over the legal use of coercive power. Most neo-realists assume that conditions of anarchy and competition accentuate the concerns for absolute and relative gains. As Waltz suggested in a recent article on the topic, ‘[t]he terms of political, economic and military competition are set by the larger units of the international political system’ (Waltz 2000: 53). Waltz recognizes that globalization presents new policy challenges for nation-states but he denies that the state is being pushed aside by new global actors. The state remains the primary force in international relations and has expanded its power to effectively manage the processes of globalization.

What neo-realists are most concerned with are the new security challenges presented by globalization. Two examples follow.

Neo-realists are concerned with the uneven nature of economic globalization. Inequality in the international system may be the greatest security threat in the future. People without food are inclined to seek change, and often that change will be violent. Economic globalization can also accentuate existing differences in societies,
creating instability in strategic regions, thereby challenging world order.

Most neo-realists would claim that forces of globalization challenge sovereignty. However, states have not lost their authority and control. Yet globalization has had a significant impact on domestic politics and the existing power structures. **Transnational social movements** (TSMOS) and global advocacy networks have successfully shifted many political issues away from the state. For example, some neo-realists are concerned that the power and security of the state are being undermined by political movements seeking to force states to make new rules that control the use of nuclear and conventional weapons. These movements deftly use the press, the Internet, and activist networks to challenge many of the core assumptions of the dominant realist/neo-realist policy perspective. Realists and neo-realists tend to favour elitist models of decision-making, especially in security areas. Some neo-realists have expressed concern that globalization might contribute to an unwanted democratization of politics in critical security areas (see Chs 14 and 22). Their concern is that expertise will be overwhelmed by public emotions.

Most of the discussion of globalization among neo-liberals falls into two categories: (1) a free-market commercial neo-liberalism that dominates policy circles throughout the world; and (2) academic neo-liberal institutionalism that promotes regimes and institutions as the most effective means of managing the globalization process.

The end of the cold war was the end of the Soviet experiment in command economics, and it left capitalism and free-market ideas with few challengers in international economic institutions and national governments. Free-market neo-liberals believe that governments should not fight globalization or attempt to slow it down. These neo-liberals want minimal government interference in the national or global market. From this perspective, institutions should promote rules and norms that keep the market open and discourage states that attempt to interfere with market forces. Other more social democratic neo-liberals support institutions and regimes that manage the economic processes of globalization as a means to prevent the uneven flow of capital and other resources that might widen the gap between rich and poor states.

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**Box 7.3 Neo-liberalism and its current critics**

**Critical voices**

‘Free trade theorists claimed that the rising tide will lift all boats, providing broad, economic benefits to all levels of society. The evidence so far clearly shows that it lifts only yachts.’

*(Barker and Mander 1999: 4)*

After twenty years of carefully following international economic rules such as free trade, price deregulation, and privatization as promoted by the neo-liberal Washington consensus, several Latin American countries have elected new governments that are more concerned about uneven economic growth and greater inequalities within their countries. Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador have new leaders who are hostile to privatization schemes and who are not afraid of nationalizing foreign corporations to address much-needed social programmes in their countries. Many of these ‘socialist’ governments are supported by native peoples or indigenous groups who are concerned with the foreign ownership of natural resources like coal, oil, and gas. Dani Rodrik (1997) argues that globalization raises the mobility of capital, making it very difficult for governments to tax profit. Thus profits from energy resources are not available for social programmes like health, education, and poverty reduction. The leader of this twenty-first-century socialist revolution is Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela. He is building a Latin American coalition to challenge US military and political hegemony and neo-liberal orthodoxy in the Latin American region and the world.

**Neo-liberal defenders**

The benefits of globalization are clear to neo-liberal free-market advocates, and these advocates believe that those who fight against these processes suffer from globalphobia and neglect to appreciate key benefits of a global economy. First, the more global the economy, the more manufacturers or producers in a given country can take advantage of commodities, production processes, and markets in other countries. Second, globalization encourages the diffusion of knowledge and technology, which increases the opportunities for economic growth worldwide. Third, the rich countries and corporations in the global North have capital that they will lend to developing states for economic growth if these states accept the rules of the neo-liberal economic system. Fourth and finally, if trade barriers are minimal and government takes a minor role in trying to manage the economy, the chances for government corruption and political interference are greatly reduced. Most neo-liberals have sound faith in the market and believe that globalization will encourage further economic integration among public and private actors in the economy. Private forms of economic integration are increasing across the world. Banks, investment firms, and industries are merging, linking Europe with the USA, China with Africa, and Russia with Colorado. Neo-liberals predict that the globalization momentum will increase due to the declining costs of transportation, technology, and communications. Distance is disappearing.

*(Adapted from Burtless et al. 1998)*
Recent demonstrations against global economic institutions in the USA and Europe suggest that there are many who feel that the market is anything but fair. People marching in the streets of London and Seattle called for global institutions that provide economic well-being for all and for reformed institutions that promote social justice, ecological balance, and human rights (see Box 7.3). The critics of economic globalization state that governments will have to extend their jurisdictions and intervene more extensively in the market to address these concerns, as well as open the market and all its opportunities to those people now left out. Given the current neo-liberal thinking, this kind of radical change is unlikely.

**Key Points**

- Neo-realists think that states are still the principal actors in international politics. Globalization challenges some areas of state authority and control, but politics is still international.
- Neo-realists are concerned about new security challenges resulting from uneven globalization, namely inequality and conflict.
- Globalization provides opportunities and resources for transnational social movements that challenge the authority of states in various policy areas. Neo-realists are not supportive of any movement that seeks to open critical security issues to public debate.
- Free-market neo-liberals believe globalization is a positive force. Eventually, all states will benefit from the economic growth promoted by the forces of globalization. They believe that states should not fight globalization or attempt to control it with unwanted political interventions.
- Some neo-liberals believe that states should intervene to promote capitalism with a human face or a market that is more sensitive to the needs and interests of all the people. New institutions can be created and older ones reformed to prevent the uneven flow of capital, promote environmental sustainability, and protect the rights of citizens.

**Conclusion: narrowing the agenda of international relations**

Neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism are status quo rationalist theories. They are theories firmly embraced by mainstream scholars and by key decision-makers in many countries. There are some differences between these theories; however, these differences are minor compared to the issues that divide reflectivist and rationalist theories and critical and problem-solving theories (see Ch. 10).

In scholarly communities, neo-realism generally represents an attempt to make realism more theoretically rigorous. Waltz’s emphasis on system structure and its impact on the behaviour of states leads one to conclude that international relations is not explained by looking inside the state. Neo-realists who reduce international politics to microeconomic rational choice or instrumental thinking also minimize the idiosyncratic attributes of individual decision-makers and the different cultural and historical factors that shape politics within a state. These more scientific and parsimonious versions of neo-realism offer researchers some powerful explanations of state behaviour. However, do these explanations offer a complete picture of a given event or a policy choice? Does neo-realist scholarship narrow the research agenda? Recently, neo-realist scholars have been criticized for their inability to explain the end of the cold war and other major transformations in the international system. Neo-realists minimize the importance of culture, traditions, and identity—all factors that shaped the emergence of new communities that helped to transform the Soviet empire.

Contributions by neo-realists in security studies have had a significant impact on the policy community. Both defensive and offensive neo-realists claim that the world remains competitive and uncertain, and the structure of the international system makes power politics the dominant policy paradigm. This fits with the interests and belief systems of most military strategists and foreign policy decision-makers in positions of power in the world today. It continues the realist tradition that has dominated international politics for centuries and it suggests that the criticisms of the realist/neo-realist tradition may be limited to the academic world. However, critical perspectives, inside and outside the academic world, are causing some realists/neo-realists to re-examine their assumptions about how this world works. Certainly, defensive neo-realists represent a group of scholars and potential policy advisers who understand the importance of multilateralism and the need to build effective institutions to prevent arms races that might lead to war. There is some change, but the agenda remains state-centric and focused on military security issues.
Neo-liberalism, whether the policy variety or the academic neo-liberal institutionalism, is a rejection of the more utopian or cosmo-politan versions of liberalism. US foreign policy since the end of the cold war has involved a careful use of power to spread an American version of liberal democracy: peace through trade, investment, and commerce. In the last few years, US foreign policy has promoted business and markets over human rights, the environment, and social justice. Washington’s brand of neo-liberalism has been endorsed by many of the world’s major powers and smaller trading states. The dominant philosophy of statecraft has become a form of ‘pragmatic meliorism’, with markets and Western democratic institutions as the chosen means for improving our lives. Again, we see a narrowing of choices and a narrowing of the issues and ideas that define our study of international politics.

Neo-liberal institutionalism, with its focus on cooperation, institutions, and regimes, may offer the broadest agenda of issues and ideas for scholars and policymakers. Neo-liberal institutionalists are now asking if institutions matter in a variety of issue-areas. Scholars are asking important questions about the impact of international regimes and institutions on domestic politics and the ability of institutions to promote rules and norms that encourage environmental sustainability, human rights, and economic development. It is interesting that many neo-liberal institutionalists in the USA find it necessary to emphasize their intellectual relationship with neo-realists and ignore their connections with the English School and more cosmopolitan versions of liberalism (see Ch. 6). The emphasis on the shared assumptions with neo-realism presents a further narrowing of the agenda of international politics. A neo-liberal institutional perspective that focuses on the nature of international society or community and the importance of institutions as promoters of norms and values may be more appropriate for understanding and explaining contemporary international politics.

Every theory leaves something out. No theory can claim to offer a picture of the world that is complete. No theory has exclusive claims to the truth. Theories in international politics offer insights into the behaviour of states. Realists and neo-realists give great insights into power, conflict, and the politics of survival. However, neo-realism does not help us understand the impact of economic interdependence on state behaviour or the potential effects of institutions and regimes on domestic politics. Here is where neo-liberal institutionalism helps us construct a picture of international politics. Theories empower some actors and policy strategies and dismiss others. Neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism are theories that address status quo issues and consider questions about how to keep the system operating. These theories do not raise questions about the dominant belief system or the distribution of power and how these may be connected to conditions of poverty and violence. As you continue your studies in international politics, be critical of the theories being presented. Which theories explain the most? Which theory helps you make sense of this world? What does your theory leave out? Who or what perspective does the theory empower? Who or what view of the world is left out?

Questions

1. What are the similarities between traditional realism and neo-realism?
2. What are the intellectual foundations of neo-liberal institutionalism?
3. What assumptions about international politics are shared by neo-liberals and neo-realists? What are the significant differences between these two theories?
4. How do you react to those who say that the neo-neo debate is not much of a debate at all? Is this merely an academic debate or has this discussion had any influence on foreign policy?
5. Do you think globalization will have any impact on neo-realist and neo-liberal thinking? Is either theory useful in trying to explain and understand the globalization process?
6. What do defensive and offensive neo-realists believe? How important are their theories to military strategists?
7. What is the difference between relative and absolute gains? What role do these concepts play in neo-realist thinking? In neo-liberal thinking?
Chapter 7  Contemporary mainstream approaches: neo-realism and neo-liberalism

8 How might the proliferation of institutions in various policy areas influence the foreign policy process in major, middle-ranking, and small states? Do you think these institutions will mitigate the effects of anarchy as neo-liberals claim?

9 Why do you think neo-realism and neo-liberalism maintain such dominance in US International Relations scholarship?

10 If we study international politics as defined by neo-realists and neo-liberal institutionalists, what are the issues and controversies we would focus on? What is left out of our study of international politics?

Further Reading

**General surveys with excellent coverage of the neo-realist and neo-liberal perspectives**


**Mandelbaum, M.** (2002), *The Ideas that Conquered the World* (New York: Public Affairs). An excellent review of the core ideas of peace, democracy, and free-market capitalism. Liberalism is discussed as the sole surviving ideology as the cold war ended.

**For more information on the neo-liberal/neo-realist debate**


**Security and neo-realism**

**Mearsheimer, J.** (2003), *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton). The author presents the basics of his offensive realist theory of world politics and uses historical evidence to support his position that all states seek to survive by maximizing their power.

--- and **Walt, S.** (2003), 'An Unnecessary War', *Foreign Policy* (Jan.-Feb.): 51–9. The article raises several serious concerns about how the Bush administration distorted the facts to justify the war with Iraq.

**Neo-liberalism and neo-liberal institutionalism**


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Chapter 8

Marxist theories of international relations

STEPHEN HOBDEN · RICHARD WYN JONES
**Glossary**

**Absolute gains:** all states seek to gain more power and influence in the system to secure their national interests. This is absolute gain. Offensive neo-realists are also concerned with increasing power relative to other states. One must have enough power to secure interests and more power than any other state in the system—friend or foe.

**Abuse:** states justify self-interested wars by reference to humanitarian principles.

**Agent-structure problem:** the problem is how to think about the relationship between agents and structures. One view is that agents are born with already formed identities and interests and then treat other actors and the broad structure that their interactions produce as a constraint on their interests. But this suggests that actors are pre-social to the extent that there is little interest in their identities or possibility that they might change their interests through their interactions with others. Another view is to treat the structure not as a constraint but rather as constituting the actors themselves. Yet this might treat agents as cultural dupes because they are nothing more than artefacts of that structure. The proposed solution to the agent-structure problem is to try and find a way to understand how agents and structures constitute each other.

**Anarchic system:** the ‘ordering principle’ of international politics according to realism, and that which defines its structure as lacking any central authority.

**Anarchy:** a system operating in the absence of any central government. Does not imply chaos, but in realist theory the absence of political authority.

**Anti-foundationalist:** positions argue that there are never neutral grounds for asserting what is true in any given time or space. Our theories of world define what counts as the facts and so there is no neutral position available to determine between rival claims.

**Apartheid:** system of racial segregation introduced in South Africa in 1948, designed to ensure white minority domination.

**Appeasement:** a policy of making concessions to a revanchist (or otherwise territorially acquisitive) state in the hope that settlement of more modest claims will assuage that state’s expansionist appetites. Appeasement remains most (in)famously associated with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s acquiescence to Hitler’s incursions into Austria and then Czechoslovakia, culminating in the Munich Agreement of September 1938. Since then, appeasement has generally been seen as synonymous with a craven collapse before the demands of dictators—encouraging, not disarming, their aggressive designs.

**ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):** a geopolitical and economic organization of several countries located in Southeast Asia. Initially formed as a display of solidarity against Communism, its aims now have been redefined and broadened to include the acceleration of economic growth and the promotion of regional peace. By 2005 the ASEAN countries had a combined GDP of about $884 billion.

**Asian financial crisis:** the severe disruption to the economies of Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia in 1997/1998, starting as huge international speculation against the prevailing price of those five countries’ currencies and then spreading to intense balance sheet problems for their banking sectors.

**Asymmetrical globalization:** describes the way in which contemporary globalization is unequally experienced across the world and among different social groups in such a way that it produces a distinctive geography of inclusion in, and exclusion from, the global system.

**Axis of evil:** phrase deliberately used by George W. Bush in January 2002 to characterize Iran, North Korea, and Iraq.

**Balance of power:** in realist theory, 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). It is a doctrine and an arrangement whereby the power of one state (or group of states) is checked by the countervailing power of other states.

**Balance of trade:** the difference in monetary value between a country’s exports and its imports: if a country is exporting more than it is importing it has a balance of trade surplus; if it is importing more than it is exporting it has a balance of trade deficit.

**Bandung Conference:** a conference held in 1955 in Bandung Indonesia by representatives of twenty-nine African and Asian countries to encourage decolonization and promote economic and cultural cooperation. The conference led to the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement of 1961.

**Battle of the sexes:** a scenario in game theory illustrating the need for a coordination strategy.
**Battlespace:** in the era of aircraft and satellites, the traditional 'battlefield' has given way to the three-dimensional battlespace.

**Biopolitics:** concept introduced by Foucault; identifies two forms of intertwined power: the disciplining of the individual body and the regulation of populations.

**Breadwinner:** a traditionally masculine role of working in the public sphere for wages and providing for the economic needs of the family.

**Bretton Woods:** the regulatory system introduced at the end of the Second World War in an attempt to bring stability to those elements of the world economy under the US sphere of influence. The underlying objective of Bretton Woods was to provide sufficient policy space within domestic economies for governments to intervene in the interests of ensuring full employment.

**Brezhnev doctrine:** declaration by Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev in November 1968 that members of the Warsaw Pact would enjoy only 'limited sovereignty' in their political development. It was associated with the idea of 'limited sovereignty' for Soviet bloc nations, which was used to justify the crushing of the reform movement in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

**Brute facts:** exist independently of human agreement and will continue to exist even if humans disappear or deny their existence. Constructivists and poststructuralists disagree as to whether brute facts are socially constructed.

**Capabilities:** the resources that are under an actor's direct control such as population or size of territory, resources, economic strength, military capability, and competence (Waltz 1979: 131).

**Capacity building:** providing the funds and technical training to allow developing countries to participate in global environmental governance.

**Capital controls:** formal restrictions on the movement of money from one country to another in an attempt to ensure that finance retains a 'national' rather than a 'global' character. Such restrictions were especially associated with the Bretton Woods system introduced to regulate the western elements of the world economy in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. They created enhanced policy manoeuvrability for governments seeking to intervene in the economy in an attempt to ensure that the objective of low unemployment was met. Few remnants of the Bretton Woods system of capital controls remain today, and the IMF has created for itself the authority to ensure that they are most unlikely to return.

**Capitalism:** a system of production in which human labour and its products are commodities that are bought and sold in the market-place. In Marxist analysis, the capitalist mode of production involved a specific set of social relations that were particular to a specific historical period. For Marx there were three main characteristics of capitalism: (1) Everything involved in production (e.g. raw materials, machines, labour involved in the creation of commodities, and the commodities themselves) is given an exchange value, and all can be exchanged, one for the other. In essence, under capitalism everything has its price, including people's working time. (2) Everything that is needed to undertake production (i.e. the factories, and the raw materials) is owned by one class—the capitalists. (3) Workers are 'free', but in order to survive must sell their labour to the capitalist class, and because the capitalist class own the means of production, and control the relations of production, they also control the profit that results from the labour of workers.

**Citizenship:** the status of having the right to participate in and to be represented in politics.

**Civic nationalism:** a nationalism which claims the nation is based on commitment to a common set of political values and institutions.

**Civil and political rights:** one of the two principal groups of internationally recognized human rights. They provide legal protections against abuse by the state and seek to ensure political participation for all citizens. Examples include equality before the law, protection against torture, and freedoms of religion, speech, assembly, and political participation.

**Civil society:** (1) the totality of all individuals and groups in a society who are not acting as participants in any government institutions, or (2) all individuals and groups who are not acting as participants in government nor acting in the interests of commercial companies. The two meanings are incompatible and contested. There is a third meaning: the network of social institutions and practices (economic relationships, family and kinship groups, religious, and other social affiliations) which underlie strictly political institutions. For democratic theorists the voluntary character of these associations is taken to be essential to the workings of democratic politics.

**Clash of civilizations:** controversial idea first used by Samuel Huntington in 1993 to describe the main cultural fault-line of international conflict in a world without communism; the notion has become more popular since 9/11.

**Class:** groups of people in society who share similar characteristics. Used by Marxists in an economic sense.
to denote people who share the same relationship to the means of production—in capitalist society the bourgeoisie, which owns the means of production, and the proletariat, which do not own the means of production, and in order to subsist, must sell their labour.

***Coexistence***: the doctrine of live and let live between political communities, or states.

***Cold war***: extended worldwide conflict between communism and capitalism that is normally taken to have begun in 1947 and concluded in 1989 with the collapse of Soviet power in Europe.

***Collaboration***: a form of cooperation requiring parties not to defect from a mutually desirable strategy for an individually preferable strategy.

***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 is also the foundational principle of the League of Nations: namely, that member states would take a threat or attack on one member as an assault on them all (and on international norms more generally). The League would accordingly respond in unison to such violations of international law. Appreciating that such concerted action would ensue, putative violators—the League’s framers hoped—would be duly deterred from launching aggressive strikes in the first place. As the 1920s and 1930s showed, however, theory and practice diverged wildly, with League members failing to take concerted action against Japanese imperialism in Asia, and German and Italian expansionism in Europe and Africa.

***Collectivization of security***: the tendency for security to be organized on a multilateral basis, but without the institutional formality of a fully fledged collective security system.

***Combating terrorism***: consists of anti-terrorism efforts (measures to protect against or mitigate future terrorist attacks) and counterterrorism efforts (proactive actions designed to retaliate against or forestall terrorist actions).

***Common humanity***: we all have human rights by virtue of our common humanity, and these rights generate correlative moral duties for individuals and states.

***Community***: a human association in which members share common symbols and wish to cooperate to realize common objectives.

***Compliance***: if a state is in compliance it is living up to its obligations under a treaty. Many multilateral environmental agreements have some form of ‘monitoring and compliance procedures’ to help ensure that this happens.

***Concert***: the directorial role played by a number of great powers, based on norms of mutual consent.

***Conditionalities***: policy requirements imposed by the IMF or the World Bank—usually with a distinctively neo-liberal character—in return for the disbursement of loans. They are politically controversial insofar as they often nullify domestic electoral mandates.

***Consequentialist***: For consequentialists, it is the likely consequences of an action that should guide decisions. In international ethics, realism and utilitarianism are the most prominent consequentialist ethics.

***Constitutive rules***: in contrast to regulative rules, which are rules that regulate already existing activities and thus shape the rules of the game, constitutive rules define the game and its activities, shape the identity and interests of actors, and help define what counts as legitimate action.

***Constitutive theories***: theories that assume that our theories of the social world help to construct the social world and what we see as the external world. Thus the very concepts we use to think about the world help to make that world what it is. Constitutive theories assume mutually constitutive rather than causal relations among main ‘variables’.

***Constructivism***: an approach to international politics that concerns itself with the centrality of ideas and human consciousness and stresses a holistic and idealist view of structures. As constructivists have examined world politics they have been broadly interested in how the structure constructs the actors’ identities and interests, how their interactions are organized and constrained by that structure, and how their very interaction serves to either reproduce or transform that structure.

***Containment***: American political strategy for resisting perceived Soviet expansion, first publicly espoused by an American diplomat, George Kennan, in 1947. Containment became a powerful factor in American policy towards the Soviet Union for the next forty years, and a self-image of Western policy-makers.

***Convention***: a type of general treaty between states, often the result of an international conference. A framework convention sets out goals, organizations, scientific research, and review procedures with a view to developing future action to establish and solve environmental problems—in terms of a ‘framework convention—adjustable protocol’ model.

***Cooperation***: is required in any situation where parties must act together in order to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome.

***Coordination***: a form of cooperation requiring parties to pursue a common strategy in order to avoid the
mutually undesirable outcome arising from the pursuit of divergent strategies.

**CoP:** Conference of the Parties to a convention, usually held annually.

**Cosmopolitan model of democracy:** a condition in which international organizations, transnational corporations, global markets, and so forth are accountable to the peoples of the world. Associated with David Held, Daniele Archibugi, Mary Kaldor, and others, 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.

**Cosmopolitanism:** Denoting identification with a community, culture, or idea that transcends borders or particular societies, and implies freedom from local or national conventions/limitations. In the early 21st Century, the dominant cosmopolitanism was that of globalizing capitalism, which promoted a community and culture that was informed by market economics, a concept of universal human rights, and a relatively liberal social culture. The cosmopolitanism of globalizing capitalism fostered a degree of multiculturalism, although it sought to reconcile particular cultures to a common ground of universal political and economic principles.

**Counter-restrictionist:** international lawyers who argue that there is a legal right of humanitarian intervention in both UN Charter law and customary international law.

**Country:** a loose general term, which can be used as a synonym for a state. However, it emphasizes the concrete reality of a political community within a geographical boundary. See also the entry for state.

**Credit crunch:** A term used to describe the global Banking crisis of 2008, which saw the collapse of several banks and consequential global economic downturn.

**Critical theory:** attempts to challenge the prevailing order by seeking out, analysing, and, where possible, assisting social processes that can potentially lead to emancipatory change.

**Culture:** The sum of the norms, practices, traditions and genres produced by a community, including the beliefs and practices that characterize social life and indicate how society should be run. Cultures may be constructed in village or city locations, or across family, clan, ethnic, national, religious, and other networks.

**Currency markets:** otherwise known as, and perhaps strictly-speaking more accurately called, foreign exchange markets. They are purely private sector arrangements for buying and selling currencies, with no public sector oversight of the price at which trades are made or the amount of money that is used to make particular trades.

**Decision-making procedures:** these identify specific prescriptions for behaviour, the system of voting, for example, which will regularly change as a regime is consolidated and extended. The rules and procedures governing the GATT, for example, underwent substantial modification during its history. Indeed, the purpose of the successive conferences was to change the rules and decisionmaking procedures (Krasner 1985: 4–5).

**Decolonization:** processes by which colonies become independent of colonial powers and sovereign as states in their own right.

**Deconstruction:** holds that language is constituted by dichotomies, that one side within a dichotomy is superior to the other and that we should destabilize the hierarchy between inferior and superior terms.

**Defensive realism:** a structural theory of Realism that views states as security maximizers.

**Democracy:** a system of government in which the views and interests of the population are represented and promoted through the mechanism of free and fair elections to the political institutions of governance.

**Democratic peace:** a central plank of liberal internationalist thought, the democratic peace thesis makes two claims: first, liberal polities exhibit restraint in their relations with other liberal polities (the so-called separate peace) but are imprudent in relations with authoritarian states. The validity of the democratic peace thesis has been fiercely debated in the IR literature.

**Deontological:** deontological theories are concerned with the nature of human duty or obligation. They prioritize questions of the ‘right’ over those of the good. They focus on rules that are always right for everyone to follow, in contrast to rules that might produce a good outcome for an individual, or their society.

**Deregulation:** the removal of all regulation so that market forces, not government policy, control economic developments.

**Détente:** relaxation of tension between East and West; Soviet–American détente lasted from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, and was characterized by negotiations and nuclear arms control agreements.

**Deterritorialization:** a process in which the organization of social activities is increasingly less constrained by
geographical proximity and national territorial boundaries. Accelerated by the technological revolution and refers to the diminution of influence of territorial places, distances, and boundaries over the way people collectively identify themselves or seek political recognition. This permits an expansion of global civil society but equally an expansion of global criminal or terrorist networks.

**Development, core ideas, and assumptions:** in the orthodox view, the possibility of unlimited economic growth in a free-market system. Economies would reach a ‘take-off’ point and thereafter wealth would trickle down to those at the bottom. Superiority of the ‘Western’ model and knowledge. Belief that the process would ultimately benefit everyone. Domination, exploitation of nature. In the alternative view, sufficiency. The inherent value of nature, cultural diversity, and the community-controlled commons (water, land, air, forest). Human activity in balance with nature. Self-reliance. Democratic inclusion, participation, for example, voice for marginalized groups, e.g. women, indigenous groups. Local control.

**Diaspora:** movement around the world of people who identify themselves racially or through a common ethnic group or history.

**Diffusion:** concerns how ideas, beliefs, habits, and practices spread across a population.

**Diplomacy:** in foreign policy it refers to the use of diplomacy as a policy instrument possibly in association with other instruments such as economic or military force to enable an international actor to achieve its policy objectives. Diplomacy in world politics refers to a communications process between international actors that seeks through negotiation to resolve conflict short of war. This process has been refined, institutionalized, and professionalized over many centuries.

**Disaggregated state:** the tendency for states to become increasingly fragmented actors in global politics as every part of the government machine becomes entangled with its foreign counterparts and others in dealing with global issues through proliferating transgovernmental and global policy networks.

**Discourse:** a linguistic system that orders statements and concepts. Poststructuralists oppose the distinction between materialism factors and ideas and see the meaning of materiality as constituted through discourse.

**DissemiNations:** a term coined by Homi Bhabha that refers to the movement or engagement of ideas and knowledge across colonial and postcolonial contexts that defy any easy sense that some cultures adhere to only one set of understandings about how life is and should be led.

**Double burden:** when women enter the public workforce working for wages, they usually remain responsible for most of the reproductive and caring labour in the private sphere, thus creating a double workload.

**Dual moral standard:** in realist theory, the idea that there are two principles or standards of right and wrong: one for the individual citizen and a different one for the state.

**Ecological footprint:** used to demonstrate the load placed upon the Earth’s carrying capacity by individuals or nations. It does this by estimating the area of productive land or aqua-system required to sustain a population at its specified standard of living.

**Economic, social, and cultural rights:** one of the two principal groups of internationally recognized human rights. They guarantee individuals access to essential goods and services and seek to ensure equal social and cultural participation. Examples include rights to food, housing, health care, education, and social insurance.

**Emancipation:** the achievement of equal political, economic, and social rights.

**Embedded liberalism:** a term attributed to John Ruggie that refers to market processes and corporate activities backed by a web of social and political constraints and rewards to create a compromise between free trade globally and welfare at home.

**Empire:** a distinct type of political entity, which may or may not be a state, possessing both a home territory and foreign territories. It is a disputed concept that some have tried to apply to the United States to describe its international reach, huge capabilities, and vital global role of underwriting world order.

**Endemic warfare:** the condition in which warfare is a recurrent feature of the relations between states not least because they regard it as inevitable.

**English School:** academic writers who seek to develop the argument that states in interaction with each other constitute an international society.

**Enlightenment:** associated with rationalist thinkers of the eighteenth century. Key ideas (which some would argue remain motifs 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’ (Kant 1991: 54).

**Epistemic community:** knowledge-based transnational communities of experts and policy activists.

**Epistemology:** the study of how we can claim to know something. It is about our theories of knowledge.
Equity: also called stock or share; a number of equal portions in the nominal capital of a company; the shareholder thereby owns part of the enterprise.

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.

Ethnic nationalism: a nationalism which claims the nation is based on common descent, descent which may be indicated through such characteristics as language, history, way of life, or physical appearance.

Europe: a geographical expression that during the course of the cold war came to be identified with Western Europe, but since 1989 has once again come to be associated with the whole of the European continent.

European Union (EU): the EU was formally created in 1992 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. However, the origins of the EU can be traced back to 1951 and the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, followed in 1957 with a broader customs union (The Treaty of Rome 1958). Originally a grouping of six countries in 1957, ‘Europe’ grew by adding new members in 1973, 1981, and 1986. Since the fall of the planned economies in Eastern Europe in 1989, the EU has grown and now comprises 27 member states.

Explanatory theories: theories that see the social world as something external to our theories of the social world. On this view, the task of theory is to report on a world that exists independent from the observer and his or her theoretical position. Explanatory theories assume causal relations among main variables.

Extraterritoriality: occurs when one government attempts to exercise its legal authority in the territory of another state. It mainly arises when the US federal government deliberately tries to use domestic law to control the global activities of transnational companies.

Failed state: this is a state that has collapsed and cannot provide for its citizens without substantial external support and where the government of the state has ceased to exist inside the territorial borders of the state.

Feminism: a political project to understand so as to change women’s inequality or oppression. For some, aiming to move beyond gender, so that it no longer matters; for others, to validate women’s interests, experiences, and choices; for others, to work for more equal and inclusive social relations overall.

Flexible labour: refers to workers who lack job security, benefits, or the right to unionize. It gives companies more flexibility in hiring and firing their workforce.

Forcible humanitarian intervention: military intervention which breaches the principle of state sovereignty where the primary purpose is to alleviate the human suffering of some or all within a state’s borders.

Foundationalist: positions assume that all truth claims (about some feature of the world) can be judged objectively true or false.

Fourteen Points: President Woodrow Wilson’s vision of international society, first articulated in January 1918, included the principles of self-determination, the conduct of diplomacy on an open (not secret) basis, and the establishment of an association of nations to provide guarantees of independence and territorial integrity. Wilson’s ideas exerted an important influence on the Paris Peace Conference, though the principle of self-determination was only selectively pursued when it came to American colonial interests.

Frankfurt School: the Group of theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research, at the University of Frankfurt.

Functionalism: the idea that states can learn to cooperate effectively by beginning with global economic and social issues and then moving towards collaboration in the military and security domain.

Fundamentalism: a strict interpretation of a religious-cultural form drawn from particular understandings—often literal—of basic/fundamental scripture, doctrines, and practices. Fundamentalists typically seek to convert or exclude non-believers from their community.

G20: the Group of Twenty was established in 1999 as a forum in which major advanced and emerging economies discuss global financial and economic matters. Since its inception, it has held annual Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meetings and more recently Summits of Heads of State. G-20 Leaders Summits have been held in Washington in 2008, and in London and Pittsburgh in 2009.

G7: see G8 (Group of Eight).

G77 (Group of 77): established in 1964 by a group of 77 developing countries in the United Nations. Still in existence the G-77 aims to promote collective economic interests, mutual cooperation for development, and negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system.

G8 (Group of Eight): established in 1975 as the G5 (France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the USA);
subsequently expanded as the G7 to include Canada and Italy and since 1998 the G8 to include the Russian Federation. The G8 conducts semi-formal collaboration on world economic problems. Government leaders meet in annual G8 Summits, while finance ministers and/or their leading officials periodically hold other consultations. See further www.g8online.org.

**Game theory**: a branch of mathematics which explores strategic interaction.

**GDP**: the initials of Gross Domestic Product, which is the monetary value of all goods produced within a country's economy in a year.

**Gender**: what it means to be male or female in a particular place or time; the social construction of sexual difference.

**Gender relations**: power relations: the relational construction of masculinity and femininity, in which the masculine is usually privileged but which are contested, and changing.

**Gendered division of labour (GDL)**: the notion of 'women's work', which everywhere includes women's primary responsibility for childcare and housework, and which designates many public and paid forms of work as 'women's' or 'men's', too.

**Genealogy**: a history of the present that asks what political practices have formed the present and which alternative understandings and discourses have been marginalized and forgotten.

**General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**: the interim measure introduced in 1947 before a permanent institution was established in the form of the World Trade Organization in 1995. It provided a context over a number of negotiating rounds for countries to try to extend bilateral agreements for reducing tariff barriers to trade to multiple third countries.

**Genocide**: acts committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted in 1948.

**Glasnost**: policy of greater openness pursued by Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985, involving greater toleration of internal dissent and criticism.

**Global community**: a way to organize governance, authority, and identity that breaks with the sovereign state.

**Global environmental governance**: usually refers to the corpus of international agreements and organizations but sometimes has a more specialized meaning that stresses governance by private bodies and NGOs.

**Global governance**: the loose framework of global regulation, both institutional and normative, that constrains conduct. It has many elements: international organizations and law; transnational organizations and frameworks; elements of global civil society; and shared normative principles.

**Global network**: in a general sense, any network that spans the globe and, in a technical sense, digital networks that allow instant voice and data communication worldwide—the global information highway.

**Global policy networks**: complexes which bring together the representatives of governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the corporate sector for the formulation and implementation of global public policy.

**Global politics**: the politics of global social relations in which the pursuit of power, interests, order, and justice transcends regions and continents.

**Global poity**: the collective structures and processes by which 'interests are articulated and aggregated, decisions are made, values allocated and policies conducted through international or transnational political processes' (Ougaard 2004: 5).

**Global responsibility**: the idea that states, international institutions, and corporations should take responsibility for issues that do not fall under the rubric of the national interest.

**Global South**: an imprecise term that refers both to countries once called Third World and to the movement of peoples in the present time within Third World areas of the world and to advanced industrialized countries.

**Globalization**: a historical process involving a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents. It is also something of a catch-all phrase often used to describe a single world-economy after the collapse of communism, though sometimes employed to define the growing integration of the international capitalist system in the post-war period.

**Globalized state**: the notion of a particular kind of state that helps sustain globalization, as well as responding to its pressures. The distinctive feature of this concept is that the state is not 'in retreat' but simply behaving differently.

**Gold Standard**: the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century system through which all trading relationships were regulated through the movement of gold from importing countries to exporting countries. In theory this was supposed to lead to automatic adjustment in imports and exports, necessarily keeping all countries in trade balance; in practice it did not work this way.
Government: used narrowly to refer to the executive governing a country or more widely to cover the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, the civil service, the armed forces and the police.

Great Depression: a byword for the global economic collapse that ensued following the US Wall Street stock-market crash in October 1929. Economic shockwaves soon rippled around a world already densely interconnected by webs of trade and foreign direct investment with the result that the events of October 1929 were felt in countries as distant as Brazil and Japan.

Group rights: rights that are said to belong to groups such as minority nations or indigenous peoples rather than to individuals.

Harmony of interests: common among nineteenth-century liberals was the idea of a natural order between peoples which had been corrupted by undemocratic state leaders and outdated policies such as the balance of power. If these distortions could be swept away, they believed, we would find that there were no real conflicts between peoples.

Hegemony: a system regulated by a dominant leader, or political (and/or economic) domination of a region, usually by a superpower. In realist theory, the influence a Great Power is able to establish on other states in the system; extent of influence ranges from leadership to dominance. It is also power and control exercised by a leading state over other states.

High politics: the themes highest on the foreign policy agenda, usually those of war, security, and military threats and capabilities.

Holism: the view that structures cannot be decomposed to the individual units and their interactions because structures are more than the sum of their parts and are irreducibly social. The effects of structures, moreover, go beyond merely constraining the actors but also construct them. Constructivism holds that the international structure shapes the identities and interests of the actors.

Holocaust: the term used to describe the attempts by the Nazis to murder the Jewish population of Europe. Some 6 million Jewish people were killed, along with a further million, including Soviet prisoners, gypsies, Poles, communists, gay people, and physically or mentally disabled. The term is also used to describe an obliteration of humanity or an entire group of people.

Horizontal proliferation: means an increase in the number of actors who possess nuclear weapons.

Human development: a capability-oriented approach to development which, in the word of Mahabub ul Haq, seeks to expand the ‘range of things that people can do, and what they can be... The most basic capabilities for human development are leading a long and healthy life, being educated and having adequate resources for a decent standard of living... [and] social and political participation in society.’

Human security: the security of people, including their physical safety, their economic and social well-being, respect for their dignity, and the protection of their human rights.

Humanitarian intervention: the principle that the international community has a right/duty to intervene in states which have suffered large-scale loss of life or genocide whether due to deliberate action by its governments or because of the collapse of governance.

Hybrid identity: a term in postcolonial analysis that refers to the dynamic challenges that individuals face in a world presenting multiple options for establishing identities through a combination of often contentious activities of work, migration, group history, ethnicity, class, race, gender, national affiliation, and empathy.

Hybrid international organization: an international organization in which both private transnational actors (NGOs, parties, or companies) and governments or governmental agencies are admitted as members, with each having full rights of participation in policy making, including the right to vote on the final decisions. They are called hybrids to contrast with the common assumption that only intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) exist. In diplomatic practice they are usually included among the INGOs and so they have sometimes been called hybrid INGOs.

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. Idealism as a substantive theory of international relations is generally associated with the claim that it is possible to create a world of peace. But idealism as a social theory refers to the claim that the most fundamental feature of society is social consciousness. Ideas shape how we see ourselves and our interests, the knowledge that we use to categorize and understand the world, the beliefs we have of others, and the possible and impossible solutions to challenges and threats. The emphasis on ideas does not mean a neglect of material forces such as technology and geography. Instead it is to suggest that the meanings and
consequences of these material forces are not given by nature but rather driven by human interpretations and understandings. 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.

**Identity:** the understanding of the self in relationship to an ‘other’. Identities are social and thus are always formed in relationship to others. Constructivists generally hold that identities shape interests; we cannot know what we want unless we know who we are. But because identities are social and are produced through interactions, identities can change.

**Imperialism:** the practice of foreign conquest and rule in the context of global relations of hierarchy and subordination. It can lead to the establishment of an empire.

**Individualism:** the view that structures can be reduced to the aggregation of individuals and their interactions. International relations theories that ascribe to individualism begin with some assumption of the nature of the units and their interests, usually states and the pursuit of power or wealth, and then examine how the broad structure, usually the distribution of power, constrains how states can act and generates certain patterns in international politics. Individualism stands in contrast to holism.

**Influence:** the ability of one actor to change the values or the behaviour of another actor.

**Institutional isomorphism:** observes that actors and organizations that share the same environment will, over time, begin to resemble each other in their attributes and characteristics.

**Institutionalization:** the degree to which networks or patterns of social interaction are formally constituted as organizations with specific purposes.

**Institutions:** persistent and having connected sets of rules and practices that prescribe roles, constrain activity, and shape the expectations of actors. Institutions may include organizations, bureaucratic agencies, treaties and agreements, and informal practices that states accept as binding. The balance of power in the international system is an example of an institution. (Adapted from Haas, Keohane, and Levy 1993: 4–5.)

**Integration:** a process of ever closer union between states, in a regional or international context. The process often begins with cooperation to solve technical problems, referred to by Mitry (1943) as ramification.

**Intellectual property rights:** rules that protect the owners of content through copyright, patents, trade marks and trade secrets.

**Interconnectedness:** the interweaving of human lives so that events in one region of the world have an impact on all or most other people.

**Interdependence:** a condition where states (or peoples) are affected by decisions taken by others; for example, a decision to raise interest rates in the USA automatically exerts upward pressure on interest rates in other 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. A condition where the actions of one state impact upon other states (can be strategic interdependence or economic). Realists equate interdependence with vulnerability.

**Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs):** an international organization in which full legal membership is officially solely open to states and the decision-making authority lies with representatives from governments.

**International community:** term used by politicians, the media and non-governmental actors to refer to the states that make up the world, often in the attempt to make the most powerful ones respond to a problem, war, or crisis.

**International hierarchy:** a structure of authority in which states and other international actors are ranked according to their relative power.

**International institutions:** organizations such as the European Union, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization that have become necessary to manage regional or global economic, political and environmental matters. See entry for International organization.

**International Law:** the formal rules of conduct that states acknowledge or contract between themselves.

**International Monetary Fund (IMF):** an institution of 186 members as of early 2010, providing extensive technical assistance and short-term flows of stabilization finance to any of those members experiencing temporarily distressed public finances. Since 1978 it has undertaken comprehensive surveillance of the economic performance of individual member states as a precursor to introducing ‘corrective’ programmes for
those countries it deems to have followed the wrong policy course.

**International non-governmental organizations (INGOs):** an international organization in which membership is open to transnational actors. There are many different types, with membership from 'national' NGOs, local NGOs, companies, political parties, or individual people. A few have other INGOs as members and some have mixed membership structures.

**International order:** the normative and the institutional pattern in the relationship between states. The elements of this might be thought to include such things as sovereignty, the forms of diplomacy, international law, the role of the great powers, and the codes circumscribing the use of force.

**International organization:** any institution with formal procedures and formal membership from three or more countries. The minimum number of countries is set at three rather than two, because multilateral relationships have significantly greater complexity than bilateral relationships. There are three types of international organization: see entries for intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and hybrid international organization.

**International regime:** defined by Krasner (1983: 2) as a set of 'implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors expectations converge in a given area of international relations'. The concept was developed by neo-realists to analyse the paradox – for them – that international cooperation occurs in some issue areas, despite the struggle for power between states. They assume regimes are created and maintained by a dominant state and/or participation in a regime is the result of a rational cost benefit calculation by each state. In contrast, Pluralists would also stress the independent impact of institutions, the importance of leadership, the involvement of transnational NGOs and companies, and processes of cognitive change, such as growing concern about human rights or the environment.

**International society:** The concept used to describe a group of sovereign states that recognize, maintain, and develop common norms, rules, and practices that enable them to coexist and cooperate.

**International system:** a set of interrelated parts connected to form a whole. In Realist theory, systems have defining principles such as hierarchy (in domestic politics) and anarchy (in international politics).

**Internationalization:** this term is used to denote high levels of international interaction and interdependence, most commonly with regard to the world economy. The term is often used to distinguish this condition from globalization, as the latter implies that there are no longer distinct national economies in a position to interact.

**Intertextuality:** holds that texts form an 'intertext', so that all texts refer to other texts, but each text is at the same time unique. Shows that meaning changes as texts are quoted by other texts. Calls attention to silences and taken-for-granted assumptions.

**Intervention:** when there is direct involvement within a state by an outside actor to achieve an outcome preferred by the intervening agency without the consent of the host state.

**Intra-firm trade:** international trade from one branch of a transnational company to an affiliate of the same company in a different country.

**Islam:** a religious faith developed by the Prophet Muhammad which in the contemporary period functions as a form of political identity for millions and the inspiration of what some at least now regard as the most important ideological opposition to Western modern values.

**Islamic Conference Organization (OIC):** The international body of Muslim states, formed following an arson attack on the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem in 1969. The Charter of the OIC was instituted in 1972, and headquarters established in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of 2010, participants included 57 member states as well as a number of observer states and organizations.

**Issue, an:** consists of a set of political questions that are seen as being related, because they all invoke the same value conflicts, e.g. the issue of human rights concerns questions that invoke freedom versus order.

**Jihad:** In Arabic, jihad simply means struggle. Jihad can refer to a purely internal struggle to be a better Muslim, a struggle to make society more closely align with the teachings of the Koran, or a call to arms to wage war in self-defence of an Islamic community under attack. Adding to the confusion are various interpretations of what constitutes ‘attack’, ‘community’, and which methods can be used morally and spiritually for self-defence.

**Justice:** fair or morally defensible treatment for individuals, in the light of human rights standards or standards of economic or social well-being.

**Law of nations:** literal translation of the ancient Roman term ‘jus gentium’. Although today used interchangeably with the term ‘international law’, or
law between nations, its original meaning referred to underlying legal principles common to all nations. This gave it a strongly normative character, which was enhanced when, in the Middle Ages, it came to be closely linked to the ancient Greek concept of Natural Law. Although it retained something of this earlier meaning in Vattel's influential 18th century work, The Law of Nations, the strong emphasis on state sovereignty in Vattel's work may be seen as marking a shift towards the more modern understanding of law between sovereign states.

Liar loans: loans given by banks in the mortgage lending market which provided customers with incentives to deliberately mislead the banks by exaggerating their level of household income in order to qualify for loans to purchase higher-priced houses. No independent verification of household income took place, with bank staff often encouraging customers to bend the truth in the interests of enabling more credit to be sold.

Liberal rights: the agenda of human rights that is driven largely from a Western perspective and derived from classical liberal positions.

Liberalism: according to Doyle (1997: 207), Liberalism includes the following four claims. First, all citizens are juridically equal and have equal rights to education, access to a free press, and religious tolerance. Second, the legislative assembly of the state possesses only the authority invested in it by the people, whose basic rights it is not permitted to abuse. Third, a key dimension of the liberty of the individual is the right to own property including productive forces. Fourth, Liberalism contends that the most effective system of economic exchange is one that is largely market driven and not one that is subordinate to bureaucratic regulation and control either domestically or internationally.

Liberalization: describes government policies which reduce the role of the state in the economy such as through the dismantling of trade tariffs and barriers, the deregulation and opening of the financial sector to foreign investors, and the privatization of state enterprises.

Life cycle of norms: is a concept created by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink to distinguish the different stages of norm evolution—from emergency to cascade to internalization.

Light industry: industry that requires less capital investment to fund and operate. It is performed with light, rather than heavy, machinery.

Logic of appropriateness: attributes action to whether it is viewed as legitimate and the right thing to do, irrespective of the costs and benefits.

Logic of consequences: attributes action to the anticipated benefits and costs, mindful that other actors are doing the very same thing.

Loyalty: an emotional disposition in which people give institutions (or each other) some degree of unconditional support.

Market failure: results from the inability of the market to produce goods which require collaborative strategies.

Market self-regulation: a system in which financial institutions are allowed to regulate themselves solely on the basis of price signals emerging from markets. Those that interpret price signals successfully will make profits and stay in business; those that interpret them poorly will lose money and be forced into bankruptcy.

Marxism: the view that the most fundamental feature of society is the organization of material forces. Material forces include natural resources, geography, military power, and technology. To understand how the world works, therefore, requires taking these fundamentals into account. For International Relations scholars, this leads to forms of technological determinism or the distribution of military power for understanding the state’s foreign policy and patterns of international politics.

Materialism: see Marxism.

Meanings: takes us beyond the description of an object, event, or place and inquires into the significance it has for observers.

Means (or forces) of production: in Marxist theory, these are the elements that combine in the production process. They include labour as well as the tools and technology available during any given historical period.

Microeconomics: the branch of economics studying the behaviour of the firm in a market setting.

Millennium Development Goals: target-based, time-limited commitments in the UN Millennium Declaration 2000 to improve eight areas: poverty and hunger, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, tackling diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, environmental sustainability, and partnership working.

MoP: Meeting of the Parties to a protocol.

Mortgage-backed securities: mortgage securitization is a process through which financial institutions can take mortgage debt off their balance sheets by selling contracts to other financial institutions based on claims to future household mortgage repayments. These contracts were traded as securities on global financial markets in the early and mid 2000s without any obvious form of
public oversight of how much banks were prepared to get themselves in debt by buying them.

**Multilateralism**: the tendency for functional aspects of international relations (such as security, trade, or environmental management) to be organized around large numbers of states, or universally, rather than by unilateral state action.

**Multinational corporations (MNCs)**: companies that have operations in more than one country. They will have their headquarters in just one country (the ‘home’ country) but will either manage production or deliver services in other countries (‘host’ countries). Multinational corporations will outsource elements of their production where overseas locations give them some sort of economic advantage that they cannot secure at home: this might be a labour cost advantage, a tax advantage, an environmental standards advantage, etc. Also used of a company that has affiliates in a foreign country. These may be branches of the parent company, separately incorporated subsidiaries, or associates, with large minority shareholdings.

**Multipolarity**: a distribution of power among a number (at least three) of major powers or ‘poles’.

**Nation**: a group of people who recognize each other as sharing a common identity, with a focus on a homeland.

**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.

**National security**: a fundamental value in the foreign policy of states.

**National self-determination**: the right of distinct national groups to become states.

**Nationalism**: the idea that the world is divided into nations which provide the overriding focus of political identity and loyalty which in turn demands national self-determination. Nationalism also can refer to this idea in the form of a strong sense of identity (sentiment) or organizations and movements seeking to realize this idea (politics).

**Nation-state**: a political community in which the state claims legitimacy on the grounds that it represents the nation. The nation-state would exist if nearly all the members of a single nation were organized in a single state, without any other national communities being present. Although the term is widely used, no such entities exist.

**Natural**: a word used to describe socially appropriate gender-role behaviour. When behaviour is seen as natural it is hard to change.

**Neoclassical realism**: a version of realism that combines both structural factors such as the distribution of power and unit-level factors such as the interests of states (status quo or revisionist).

**Neo-colonial**: Informal processes that keep former colonies under the power and especially economic influence of former colonial powers and advanced industrial countries.

**Neo-medievalism**: a condition in which political power is dispersed between local, national, and supranational institutions none of which commands supreme loyalty.

**Neo-neo**: shorthand for the research agenda that neorealists and neo-liberals share.

**Neo-realism**: modification of the realist approach, by recognizing economic resources (in addition to military capabilities) are a basis for exercising influence and also an attempt to make realism ‘more scientific’ by borrowing models from economics and behavioural social science to explain international politics.

**Network**: any structure of communication for individuals and/or organizations to exchange information, share experiences, or discuss political goals and tactics. There is no clear boundary between a network and an NGO. A network is less likely than an NGO to become permanent, to have formal membership, to have identifiable leaders or to engage in collective action.

**New International Economic Order (NIEO)**: a twenty-five point manifesto presented to a special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 by the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77. It aimed to restructure the global economy in ways that would help Third World countries develop and improve their position in the world economy. It was adopted by the General Assembly but was not backed by major economic powers.

**9/11**: refers specifically to the morning of 11 September 2001 when 19 men hijacked four domestic flights en route to California which were subsequently flown into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The fourth plane crashed in Pennsylvania. There were 2,974 fatalities, not including the 19 hijackers, 15 of whom were from Saudi Arabia. The planning and organization for the attack was coordinated in Afghanistan by Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda. Approximately a month after the attack the United States and its allies launched an attack against Afghanistan to remove the Taliban from power.

**Non-discrimination**: a doctrine of equal treatment between states.
Non-governmental organization (NGO): any group of people relating to each other regularly in some formal manner and engaging in collective action, provided that the activities are non-commercial, non-violent and are not on behalf of a government. They are often presumed to be altruistic groups or public interest groups, such as Amnesty International, Oxfam or Greenpeace, but in UN practice they may come from any sector of civil society, including trades unions and faith communities.

Non-intervention: the principle that external powers should not intervene in the domestic affairs of sovereign states.

Non-Nuclear Weapon States: refers to a state that is party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, meaning it does not possess nuclear weapons.

Non-state actors: a term widely used to mean any actor that is not a government.

Norm entrepreneur: a political actor, whether an individual or an organization, that conceptualizes and promotes a new norm, to define an appropriate standard of behaviour for all actors or a defined sub-group of actors in the political system.

Normative structure: international relations theory traditionally defines structure in material terms, such as the distribution of power, and then treats structure as a constraint on actors. By identifying a normative structure, Constructivists are noting how structures also are defined by collectively held ideas such as knowledge, rules, beliefs, and norms that not only constrain actors, but also construct categories of meaning, constitute their identities and interests, and define standards of appropriate conduct. Critical here is the concept of a norm, a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity. Actors adhere to norms not only because of benefits and costs for doing so but also because they are related to a sense of self.

Normative theory: systematic analyses of the ethical, moral, and political principles which either govern or ought to govern the organization or conduct of global politics. 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.

Norms: specify general standards of behaviour, and identify the rights and obligations of states. So, in the case of the GATT, the basic norm is that tariffs and non-tariff barriers should be reduced and eventually eliminated. Together, norms and principles define the essential character of a regime and these cannot be changed without transforming the nature of the regime.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): organization established by treaty in April 1949 comprising 12 (later 16) countries from Western Europe and North America. The most important aspect of the NATO alliance was the American commitment to the defence of Western Europe.

Nuclear taboo: the idea that a specific international norm has gradually become accepted by the international community that the use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable in warfare.

Nuclear weapons free zone: these are agreements which establish specific environments or geographic regions as nuclear weapons free, although there may be varying requirements between zones.

Offensive realism: a structural theory of realism that views states as security maximizers.

Ontology: the study of what is. It is about the nature of being.

Open war economy: a war which is sustained, not by the combatants primary reliance on their own industrial production, as in the Second World War, but rather by their integration into the world economy, particularly its international criminal dimension.

Order: this may denote any regular or discernible pattern of relationships that are stable over time, or may additionally refer to a condition that allows certain goals to be achieved.

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC): created in 1960 by the major oil producing countries of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela, and later expanded in membership to include states like Nigeria, Mexico, and Libya, to coordinate oil production policies in the interest of market stability and profit for producers.

Orientalism: western interpretations of the institutions, cultures, arts, and social life of countries of the East and Middle East. The subject of a major study by Edward Said, Orientalism is associated today with stereotyping and prejudice, often against Islamic societies.

Ostpolitik: the West German government’s ‘Eastern Policy’ of the mid-to-late 1960s, designed to develop relations between West Germany and members of the Warsaw Pact.

Paradigm: theories that share ontological and epistemological assumptions form a paradigm.
Patriarchy: a persistent society-wide structure within which gender relations are defined by male dominance and female subordination.

Peace enforcement: designed to bring hostile parties to agreement, which may occur without the consent of the parties.

Peaceful coexistence: the minimal basis for orderly relations between states even when they are in contention with each other, as in the cold war period.

Peacekeeping: the deployment of a UN presence in the field with the consent of all parties (this refers to classical peacekeeping).

Peace of Westphalia: see Treaties of Westphalia.

Perestroika: policy of restructuring, pursued by former Soviet premier, Mikhail Gorbachev in tandem with glasnost, and intended to modernize the Soviet political and economic system.

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, the priority of national security, and the assumption that states are unitary actors. It is the theoretical approach that considers all organized groups as being potential political actors and analyses the processes by which actors mobilize support to achieve policy goals. Pluralists can accept that transnational actors and international organizations may influence governments. Equated by some writers with liberalism, but pluralists reject any such link, denying that theory necessarily has a normative component, and holding that liberals are still highly state-centric.

Pluralist international society theory: states are conscious of sharing common interests and common values, but these are limited to norms of sovereignty and non-intervention.

Policy domain: consists of a set of political questions that have to be decided together because they are linked by the political processes in an international organization, e.g., financial policy is resolved in the IMF. A policy domain may cover several issues: financial policy includes development, the environment, and gender issues.

Political community: a community that wishes to govern itself and to be free from alien rule.

Popular culture: those genres and forms of expression that are mass-consumed, including music, film, television, and video games. Popular culture is usually seen as less refined than 'high culture.' The definition of 'high' and 'low'/popular' culture changes across time and space.

Postcolonial: contemporary international and transnational relations of race, migration, ethnicity, culture, knowledge, power, and identity.

Post-colonial: the study of the interactions between European states and the societies they colonized in the modern period.

Postmodern or 'new' terrorism: Groups and individuals with millennial and apocalyptic ideologies with system level goals. Most value destruction for its own sake, unlike most terrorists in the past who had specific goals usually tied to a territory.

Post-Westphalian: an order in which national borders, and the principle of sovereignty, are no longer paramount.

Post-Westphalian War: Intra-state warfare, typical in the post-cold war period, that is aimed neither at the sovereignty of an enemy state, nor at seizing control of the state apparatus of the country in which it is being waged.

Poverty: in the orthodox view, a situation suffered by people who do not have the money to buy food and satisfy other basic material needs. In the alternative view, a situation suffered by people who are not able to meet their material and non-material needs through their own effort.

Power: in the most general sense, the ability of a political actor to achieve its goals. In the realist approach, it is assumed that possession of capabilities will result in influence, so the single word, power, is often used ambiguously to cover both. In the pluralist approach, it is assumed that political interactions can modify the translation of capabilities into influence and therefore it is important to distinguish between the two. Power is defined by most realists in terms of the important resources such as size of armed forces, gross national product, and population that a state possesses. There is the implicit belief that material resources translate into influence. Poststructuralists understand power as productive that is as referring to the constitution of subjectivity in discourse. Knowledge is interwoven with power.

Primordialism: the belief that certain human or social characteristics, such as ethnicity, are deeply embedded in historical conditions.

Principles: in regime theory, they are represented by coherent bodies of theoretical statements about how the world works. The GATT operated on the basis of liberal principles which assert that global welfare will be maximized by free trade.

Prisoners' dilemma: a scenario in game theory illustrating the need for a collaboration strategy.
Programmes and Funds: activities of the UN which are subject to the supervision of the General Assembly and which depend upon voluntary funding by states and other donors.

Protection myth: a popular assumption that male heroes fight wars to protect the vulnerable, primarily women and children. It is used as a justification for states’ national security policies, particularly in times of war.

Protocol: a legal instrument that is added to a convention, usually containing detailed rules and undertakings, so that environmental and other problems can be controlled. There can be many protocols to one convention or treaty.

Public bads: the negative consequences which can arise when actors fail to collaborate.

Public goods: goods which can only be produced by a collective decision, and which cannot, therefore, be produced in the market-place.

Quasi-state: a state which has ‘negative sovereignty’ because other states respect its sovereign independence but lacks ‘positive sovereignty’ because it does not have the resources or the will to satisfy the needs of its people.

Rapprochement: re-establishment of more friendly relations between the People’s Republic of China and the United States in the early 1970s.

Ratification: the procedure by which a state approves a convention or protocol that it has signed. There will be rules in the treaty concerning the number of ratifications required before it can enter into force.

Rational choice: an approach that emphasizes how actors attempt to maximize their interests, how they attempt to select the most efficient means to achieve those interests, and attempts to explain collective outcomes by virtue of the attempt by actors to maximize their preferences under a set of constraints. Deriving largely from economic theorizing, the rational choice to politics and international politics has been immensely influential and applied to a range of issues.

Rationality: reflected in the ability of individuals to place their preferences in rank order and choose the best available preference.

Realism: the theoretical approach that analyzes all international relations as the relation of states engaged in the pursuit of power. Realism cannot accommodate non-state actors within its analysis.

Reason of state: the practical application of the doctrine of realism and virtually synonymous with it.

Reciprocity: reflects a ‘tit for tat’ strategy, only cooperating if others do likewise.

Regime: see also international regime. These are sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations. They are social institutions that are based on agreed rules, norms, principles, and decision-making procedures. These govern the interactions of various state and non-state actors in issue-areas such as the environment or human rights. The global market in coffee, for example, is governed by a variety of treaties, trade agreements, scientific and research protocols, market protocols, and the interests of producers, consumers, and distributors. States organize these interests and consider the practices, rules, and procedures to create a governing arrangement or regime that controls the production of coffee, monitors its distribution, and ultimately determines the price for consumers. (Adapted from Young 1997: 6.)

Regionalism: development of institutionalized cooperation among states and other actors on the basis of regional contiguity as a feature of the international system.

Regionalization: growing interdependence between geographically contiguous states, as in the European Union.

Regulative rules: in contrast to constitutive rules, which define the game and its activities, shape the identity and interests of actors, and help define what counts as legitimate action, regulative rules regulate already existing activities and thus shape the rules of the game.

Regulatory arbitrage: in the world of banking, the process of moving funds or business activity from one country to another, in order to increase profits by escaping the constraints imposed by government regulations. By analogy the term can be applied to any transfer of economic activity by any company in response to government policy.

Relations of production: in Marxist theory, relations of production link and organize the means of production in the production process. They involve both the technical and institutional relationships necessary to allow the production process to proceed, as well as the broader structures that govern the control of the means of production, and control of the end product(s) of that process. Private property and wage labour are two of the key features of the relations of production in capitalist society.

Relative gains: one of the factors that realists argue constrain the willingness of states to cooperate. States
are less concerned about whether everyone benefits (absolute gains) and more concerned about whether someone may benefit more than someone else.

**Responsibility to protect:** states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens, but when they are unable or unwilling to do so this responsibility is transferred to the society of states.

**Restrictionists:** international lawyers who argue that humanitarian intervention violates Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and is illegal under both UN Charter law and customary international law.

**Revolution in military affairs:** describes a radical change in the conduct of warfare. This can be driven by technology, but may also result from organizational, doctrinal, or other developments. When the change is of several orders of magnitude, and impacts deeply on wider society, the term 'military revolution' is used to describe it.

**Rules:** operate at a lower level of generality to principles and norms, and they are often designed to reconcile conflicts which may exist between the principles and norms. Third World states, for example, wanted rules which differentiated between developed and underdeveloped countries.

**Second cold war:** period of East-West tension in the 1980s compared to the early period of confrontation between 1946 and 1953.

**Security:** in finance, a contract with a claim to future payments in which (in contrast to bank credits) there is a direct and formally identified relationship between the investor and the borrower; also unlike bank loans, securities are traded in markets.

**Security community:** a group of people which has become "integrated". By integration we mean the attainment, within a territory, of a "sense of community" and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure dependability expectations of "peaceful change" among its population. By a "sense of community" we mean a belief... that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of "peaceful change" (Karl Deutsch et al. 1957).

**Selectivity:** an agreed moral principle is at stake in more than one situation, but national interest dictates a divergence of response.

**Self-determination:** a principle ardently, but selectively, espoused by US President Woodrow Wilson in the peacemaking that followed the First World War: namely that each 'people' should enjoy self-government over its own sovereign nation-state. Wilson pressed for application of this principle to East/Central Europe, but did not believe that other nationalities (in colonized Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Caribbean) were fit for self-rule.

**Self-help:** in realist theory, in an anarchical environment, states cannot assume other states will come to their defence even if they are allies. Each state must take care of itself.

**11 September, 2001 (9/11):** the day when four aircraft were hijacked by Islamic terrorists in the United States—two of which destroyed the World Trade Center in New York, one which partially destroyed the Pentagon, and a fourth which crash-landed in a field in Pennsylvania (see also 9/11).

**Sexual relations / power relations:** the relational construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality, in which the heterosexual is usually privileged.

**Shadow of the future:** a metaphor indicating that decision-makers are conscious of the future when making decisions.

**Sinatra doctrine:** statement by the Soviet foreign ministry in October 1989 that countries of Eastern Europe were 'doing it their way' (a reference to Frank Sinatra's song 'I did it my way') and which marked the end of the Brezhnev doctrine and Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.

**Single Undertaking:** under WTO rules, there is a requirement for members to accept or reject the outcome of multiple multilateral negotiations as one package of reforms, rather than only choosing those parts with which they are most happy.

**Skyjacking:** the takeover of a commercial airplane for the purpose of seizing hostages and using them hostages to publicize a grievance or bargain for a particular political or economic goal.

**Social construction of reality:** suggests that reality is a product of human action, interaction, and knowledge. Actors and organizations will interact and develop shared ideas about what exists 'out there', and, once they have agreement about these concepts, this knowledge helps to form their understanding of the world.

**Social facts:** dependent on human agreement, their existence shapes how we categorize the world and what we do.

**Social movement:** people with a diffuse sense of collective identity, solidarity, and common purpose that usually leads to collective political behaviour. The concept covers all the different NGOs and networks, plus all their members and all the other individuals who share the common value(s). Thus, the women's movement and the environmental movement are much more than the
specific NGOs that provide leadership and focus the
desire for social change.

Society of states: an association of sovereign states
based on their common interests, values, and norms.

Solidarism: a view that the international society of
state is capable of acting together (in solidarity) to
uphold or defend shared values. International society is not
merely a framework of coexistence but agent for change
and humanitarianism.

Sovereign equality: the technical legal equality pos-
possessed by sovereign states as expressed in UN General
Assembly votes.

Sovereignty: the principle that within its territorial
boundaries the state is the supreme political authority,
and that outside those boundaries the state recognizes
no higher political authority.

Specialized agencies: international institutions which
have a special relationship with the central system of the
United Nations but which are constitutionally independ-
ent, having their own assessed budgets, executive heads
and committees, and assemblies of the representatives
of all state members.

Stagnation: a situation experienced by many of the
world’s most advanced industrialized countries in the
1970s, where a period of very limited or even no growth
was accompanied by seemingly runaway price increases.
The word is a compound of ‘stagnation’ (indicating the
no-growth scenario) and ‘inflation’ (indicating the large
increases in the general price level).

State: the one word is used to refer to three distinct
concepts: (1) In international law, a state is an entity that
is recognized to exist when a government is in control
of a population residing within a defined territory. It is
comparsable to the idea in domestic law of a company
being a legal person. Such entities are seen as possessing
sovereignty that is recognised by other states in the
international system. (2) In the study of international
politics, each state is a country. It is a community of
people who interact in the same political system. (3) In
philosophy and sociology, the state consists of the ap-
paratus of government, in its broadest sense, covering
the executive, the legislature, the administration, the
judiciary, the armed forces, and the police. For Weber,
the essential domestic feature of a state was a monopoly
over the legitimate use of force.

State autonomy: in a more interdependent world,
simply to achieve domestic objectives national gov-
ernments are forced to engage in extensive multilat-
eral collaboration and cooperation. But in becoming
more embedded in frameworks of global and regional
governance states confront a real dilemma: in return for
more effective public policy and meeting their citizens’
demands, whether in relation to the drugs trade or
employment, their capacity for self-governance—that is
state autonomy—is compromised.

State capitalism: an economic system in which state
authorities have a financial stake, and degrees of actual
control, over the means of production and exchange.

State of war: the conditions (often described by clas-
sical realists) where there is no actual conflict, but a
permanent cold war that could become a ‘hot’ war at
any time.

State sovereignty: a principle for organizing political
space where there is one sovereign authority which gov-
erns a given territory. The Treaties of Westphalia is us-
ually defined as the birth of state sovereignty, although
it took several hundred years before the principle was
fully institutionalized. International Relations theories
hold different views of whether state sovereignty has
been transformed or even eroded. They also disagree as
to whether state sovereignty is a good way of organizing
political community that is state sovereignty’s normative
status.

State system: the regular patterns of interaction be-
tween states, but without implying any shared values
between them. This is distinguished from the view of a
‘society’ of states.

Stateless: individuals who do not ‘belong’ to any state
and therefore do not have passports or rights.

State-sponsored terrorism: exists when individual
states provide support to terrorist groups including
funding, training, and resources including weapons.
Claims of state sponsorship of terrorism are difficult
to prove. States go to great lengths to ensure that their
involvement is as clandestine as possible so that their
leaders have a degree of plausible deniability when the
respond to such charges. Other claims of state sponsor-
ship are a matter of subjective opinion. In other cases
the term confuses ‘state terror’ (the use of violence by
the state to keep its own citizenry fearful, or the origi-
nal connotation of terrorism) with state-sponsored
terrorism.

Statism: in realist theory, the ideology that supports
the organization of humankind into particular com-
munities; the values and beliefs of that community are
protected and sustained by the state.

Stockholding companies: primarily a seventeenth-
and eighteenth-century phenomenon, through which a
significant proportion of world trade was conducted by
a small number of massive companies. These companies
were responsible for opening up trade routes between Europe and Asia, setting up colonial structures in Asia to trade successfully back at home.

**Structuration**: concerns the relationship between agents and structures, trying to imagine the simultaneous process of the environment shaping actors and actors shaping their environment.

**Structure**: in the philosophy of the social sciences a structure is something that 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.

**Subaltern**: social groups at the lowest levels of economic power and esteem who are often excluded from political participation, such as peasants or women. Subaltern Studies, which developed first in India, focuses on the history and culture of subaltern groups.

**Sub-prime crisis**: the popular expression for the 2007 rupture in mortgage lending markets which exposed banks to bad debts and resulted in a global credit crunch.

**Subsistence**: Work necessary for basic family survival, such as food production, for which the worker does not receive wages.

**Summit diplomacy**: refers to a direct meeting between heads of government (of the superpowers in particular) to resolve major problems. The ‘summit’ became a regular mode of contact during the cold war.

**Superpower**: term used to describe the United States and the Soviet Union after 1945, denoting their global political involvements and military capabilities, including in particular their nuclear arsenals.

**Supranationalism**: concept in integration theory that implies the creation of common institutions having independent decision-making authority and thus the ability to impose certain decisions and rules on member states.

**Survival**: the first priority for state leaders, emphasized by historical realists such as Machiavelli, Meinecke, and Weber.

**Sustainable development**: this has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Technological revolution**: refers to the way modern communications (the Internet, satellite communications, high-tech computers) made possible by technological advances have made distance and location less important factors not just for government (including at local and regional levels) but equally in the calculations of other actors such as firms’ investment decisions or in the activities of social movements.

**Territorial state**: a state that has power over the population which resides on its territory but which does not seek to represent the nation or the people as a whole.

**Territoriality**: borders and territory still remain important, not least for administrative purposes. Under conditions of globalization, however, a new geography of political organization and political power is emerging which transcends territories and borders.

**Territory**: a portion of the earth’s surface appropriated by a political community, or state.

**Terrorism**: the use of illegitimate violence by sub-state groups to inspire fear, by attacking civilians and/or symbolic targets. This is done for purposes such as drawing widespread attention to a grievance, provoking a severe response, or wearing down their opponent’s moral resolve, to affect political change. Determining when the use of violence is legitimate, which is based on contextual morality of the act as opposed to its effects, is the source for disagreement over what constitutes terrorism.

**The end of history**: famous phrase employed by Francis Fukuyama in 1989; this argued that one phase of history shaped by the antagonism between collectivism and individualism had (two hundred years after the French Revolution) come to an end, leaving Liberalism triumphant.

**Theocracy**: a state based on religion.

**Third World**: a notion that was first used in the late 1950s to define both the underdeveloped world and the political and economic project that would help overcome underdevelopment: employed less in the post-cold war era.

**Time-space compression**: the technologically induced erosion of distance and time giving the appearance of a world that is in communication terms shrinking.

**Total war**: a term given to the twentieth century’s two world wars to denote not only their global scale but also the combatants’ pursuit of their opponents’ ‘unconditional surrender’ (a phrase particularly associated with the Western allies in the Second World War). Total war also signifies the mobilization of whole populations—including women into factory work, auxiliary civil defence units, and as paramilitaries and paramedics—as part of the total call-up of all able-bodied citizens in pursuit of victory.

**Toxic assets**: the name popularly given to the failed investments that most western banks made in mortgage-backed securities in the lead up to the sub-prime crisis.
An important part of the government bailouts that were enacted in many advanced industrialized countries in 2008 and 2009 was an attempt to use public money in order to take the toxic assets off the balance sheets of banks. Western banks had bought large stocks of mortgage-backed securities at often high prices, but when the market for trading these securities completely evaporated in 2008 it revealed huge losses for the banks and unrecoverable short-term debts. Governments typically chose to use the bailouts in order to replace the essentially worthless toxic assets on banks' balance sheets with other assets that continued to have high prices, thus saving the banks from bankruptcy.

Transfer price: the price set by a transnational company for intra-firm trade of goods or services. For accounting purposes, a price must be set for exports, but it need not be related to any market price.

Transition: usually taken to mean the lengthy period between the end of communist planning in the Soviet bloc and the final emergence of a fully functioning democratic capitalist system.

Transnational actor: any civil society actor from one country that has relations with any actor from another country or with an international organization.

Transnational civil society: a political arena in which citizens and private interests collaborate across borders to advance their mutual goals or to bring governments and the formal institutions of global governance to account for their activities.

Transnational company/corporation (TNC): see multinational corporations (MNCs).

Treaties of Westphalia 1648: the Treaties of Osnabruck and Munster, which together form the 'Peace of Westphalia', ended the Thirty Years War and were crucial in delimiting the political rights and authority of European monarchs. Among other things, the Treaties granted monarchs rights to maintain standing armies, build fortifications, and levy taxes.

Triads: the three economic groupings (North America, Europe, and East Asia).

Triangulation: occurs when trade between two countries is routed indirectly via a third country. For example, in the early 1980s, neither the Argentine Government nor the British Government permitted trade between the two countries, but companies simply sent their exports via Brazil or Western Europe.

Tribal: community defined through family relations or as living in the same local space, usually applied to the non-Western world. When used as a non-academic term it often has the connotations of something that is pre-modern, underdeveloped and inferior to Western societies.

Trilateral Conference: a follow-up meeting to the Bandung Conference in 1966 that was held in Havana Cuba. Five hundred delegates from independent and decolonizing states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa attended. The Conference produced more radical proposals for achieving decolonization and nonaligned power, such as armed struggle.

Truman doctrine: statement made by US President Harry Truman in March 1947 that it 'must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.' Intended to persuade Congress to support limited aid to Turkey and Greece, the doctrine came to underpin the policy of containment and American economic and political support for its allies.

Tyrannical states: states where the sovereign government is massively abusing the human rights of its citizens, engaging in acts of mass killing, ethnic cleansing, and/or genocide.

Unilateral humanitarian intervention: Military intervention for humanitarian purposes which is undertaken without the express authorization of the United Nations Security Council.

Unipolarity: a distribution of power internationally in which there is clearly only one dominant power or 'pole.' Some analysts argue that the international system became unipolar in the 1990s since there was no longer any rival to American power.

United Nations Charter (1945): the Charter of the United Nations is the legal regime that created the United Nations as the world's only 'supranational' organization. The Charter defines the structure of the United Nations, the powers of its constitutive organs, and the rights and obligations of sovereign states party to the Charter. Among other things, the Charter is the key legal document limiting the use of force to instances of self-defence and collective peace enforcement endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. See also Specialized agencies.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The principal normative document of the global human rights regime. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948, it provides a comprehensive list of interdependent and indivisible human rights that are accepted as authoritative by most states and other international actors.

Utilitarianism: Utilitarians follow Jeremy Bentham's claim that action should be directed towards producing
the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number’. In more recent years the emphasis has been not on happiness, but on welfare or general benefit (happiness being too difficult to achieve). There are also differences between act and rule utilitarians. Act utilitarianism focuses on the impact of actions whereas rule utilitarianism refers to the utility maximization following from universal conformity with a rule or set of rules.

**Versailles Peace Treaty:** the Treaty of Versailles formally ended the First World War (1914–18). The Treaty established the League of Nations, specified the rights and obligations of the victorious and defeated powers (including the notorious regime of reparations on Germany), and created the ‘Mandatories’ system under which ‘advanced nations’ were given legal tutelage over colonial peoples. **Vertical proliferation:** refers to the increase in the number of nuclear weapons by those states already in possession of such weapons.

**War on terror:** an umbrella term coined by the Bush administration and refers to the various military, political, and legal actions taken by the USA and its allies after the attacks on 11 September 2001 to curb the spread of terrorism in general but Islamic-inspired terrorism in particular.

**Warsaw Pact:** the Warsaw Pact was created in May 1955 in response to West Germany’s rearmament and entry into NATO. It comprised the USSR and seven communist states (though Albania withdrew support in 1961). The organization was officially dissolved in July 1991.

**Washington Consensus:** the belief of key opinion-formers in Washington that global welfare would be maximized by the universal application of neoclassical economic policies which favour a minimalist state and an enhanced role for the market.

**Weapons of mass destruction:** a category defined by the United Nations in 1948 to include ‘atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which have characteristics comparable in destructive effects to those of the atomic bomb or other weapons mentioned above.

**World Bank Group:** a collection of five agencies under the more general rubric of the World Bank, with headquarters in Washington, DC. Its formal objective is to encourage development in low- and medium-income countries with project loans and various advisory services. See further www.worldbank.org.

**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 governments abolished the state of nature in civil society, the establishment of a world government must end the state of war in international society.

**World order:** this is a wider category of order than the ‘international’. It takes as its units of order, not states, but individual human beings and assesses the degree of order on the basis of the delivery of certain kinds of goods (be it security, human rights, basic needs or justice) for humanity as a whole.

**World Trade Organization (WTO):** established in 1995 with headquarters in Geneva, with 153 members as of early 2010. It is a permanent institution covering services, intellectual property and investment issues as well as pure merchandise trade, and it has a disputes settlement mechanism in order to enforce its free trade agenda.

**World-travelling:** a postcolonial methodology that aims to achieve some mutual understanding between people of different cultures and points of view by finding empathetic ways to enter into the spirit of a different experience and find in it an echo of some part of oneself.