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Role	Name	Affiliation
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Module -2

Theory of Realism in International Relations
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Political realism, the dominant orthodoxy of the field, took root in these dark hours of the liberal tragedy. The philosophy of realism undoubtedly has roots in antiquity, dating back to the works of Thucydides and Kautilya. But within the academic discipline of IR, political realism became a dominant force only after the Second World War, pari pasu with the rising politico-military fortunes of the United States. The philosophy of political realism was best expressed and popularised by Hans J. Morgenthau, a Jewish German migrant to the United States, who authoritatively spelled out six basic principles of realism in his Politics Among Nations. But Morgenthau is not the only major writer on realism. It has an exceedingly rich heritage

consisting of masterpieces by E.H. Carr (1947), Richard Niebuhr (1932), John Herz (1951) Henry Kissinger (1994), Robert Gilpin (1981), and many others.

The philosophy of realism draws its appeal from its pragmatism and sparseness. Its central theoretical categories, despite all its varieties and internal differences, are statism, survival and self-help, each inextricably linked to the other (Dunne & Schmidt 2001: 150-155). The basic realist story line is the following: The international order (or system) is anarchical, devoid of a central regulatory authority, and populated by basic units that are sovereign, territorialized nationstates. The states are Weberian constructs – they monopolize the legitimate means of violence within a given territory. States are containers of political community – citizens – who are defined along the axes of sovereignty and exclusive territoriality. Within the state is a realm of order, progress and development under the heavy hand of authority. Outside the state is the sphere of uncertainty, war and anarchy, where no authority stands. The states as rational actors are solely motivated by their perceived sense of national interest. The interplay of sovereign wills in an anarchical set up leads to coalitions and countervailing coalitions, which can only be equilibrated by a balance of power. Realists marry power and security, though the relation is complex and divides realists into defensive and offensive variants. But all realists tend to agree that balance of power among dominant states secures the stability and equilibrium of the system as a whole. Morgenthau's classical realism, which borrowed heavily from Reinhold Niebuhr's Augustinian pessimism, emphasized the universal animus dominandi in men (and by extension of states), which gave rise to competition and war, unless disciplined through efficient balance of power arrangements worked out by ingenuous diplomacy. The other aspects of classical realism concerned the insistence on defining national interest by power, separating moral or ethical pronouncements from power based interest, autonomy of politics, and a passionate case for prudence as the only moral standard in international affairs (Morgenthau 1978: 4-15).

There are four basic attributes of political realism, namely, the primacy of the state, the international system as anarchy, the centrality of power, and pragmatism as morality. First, realism is about the primacy of the state, conceived as a collective actor. Realists are of the view that they recognize the primacy of groups and group interactions in human life. The fact that human beings are organized into nation states makes the state the primary unit of analysis in human life. States are viewed as rational unitary actors. While realists do not necessarily deny that there are multiple power centres within the state and that foreign policy is not always optimal rational choice, they firmly caution against any disaggregated analysis of the state. The policy pronouncements of the sovereign executive are taken as the voice and position of the state. Realists do not deny the existence of non-state actors, flows and networks in the international system; however, they hold on to the view that these actors are subordinate to the state since the latter retains the legal power to regulate and even terminate the activities of the former within the territorial bounds of the state. The state is understood in the Weberian sense of being a territorial entity having the legitimate monopoly over society's means of violence. The state is also viewed as having a distinctive legal or international personality that separates it from

all other organizations. It is defined primarily as a security institution having the responsibility to guarantee the life of its borders. Guarding external sovereignty from dangers emanating from the international system, be it from other states or powerful non-state entities, is the existential basis of the state. (Morgenthau 1978: 4-15)

Realists are divided over the role of the state in political economy. Some realists like Robert Gilpin believes that the state is vital in securing the health of the domestic economy and managing international relations in a manner conducive to the prosperity of the domestic population. (Gilpin, 1981). But many other realists do not grant any specific economic function to the state other than agreeing that the state based order provides the foundation to a normal free trading international economy (Guzzini, 1998). The domestic market cannot function without the legal guarantees of authority. Though the international authority is anarchical and devoid of any central authority, states make rules and norms for the regulation of the international market forces. Realists have also strongly rebutted claims that globalization and modern information technology have turned the state redundant. Realists have argued in contrast that while the state has lost powers to its organizational rivals in some areas, it has discovered strength in many new ones and, most crucially, in the fundamental task of maintaining security and order, the state remains uncontested despite numerous structural changes rocking the global order (Hirst and Thompson, 1996; Krasner, 1996-1997).

The feature of realism is the claim that the international system is anarchical, meaning that there is no central regulatory authority to keep law and order. States are understood to be self-help units, having the responsibility to protect their territory and population against possible predation by other states. While anarchy does not theoretically foreclose the option of collective security, realists believe that it would not be prudent of states to plan their security by external and altruistic guarantees. Anarchy induces sameness in state behaviour, independent of space and time. Those states that fail to align their policies according to the signals emanated by anarchical international system, risks military defeat or domination by strong and resourceful states. All states thus become functionally alike, and as function determines structure, they come to look similar in terms of institutional arrangements to ensure security. It should be remembered that classical realists did not have any systematic account of anarchy. They derived state's obsession with power and security from human nature. Thus Morgenthau argued that states were like men, having dark and pessimistic tendencies, with a universal desire to dominate others, and unable to trust neighbours in the absence of any effective had to guarantee security before anything else. Realists argued that peace/security was the precondition for prosperity, commerce and development. And given the fact there was no supra-authority standing above and controlling the states, the states could not leave the business of security to others.

Thirdly, realists also believe that the main concept that helps states to articulate meaningful foreign policies is national interest defined in terms of power. Power is the master variable in all forms of realism, though realists do not agree on its measurement and nature. Most realists are however devoted to the idea of balance of power. They argue that any attempt by a powerful

state to dominate over others would invariably provoke countervailing tendencies and the resultant parallelogram of forces will lead to a balance of power among them. Balance of power for most classical realists had to be carefully constructed through conscious state action, be it via internal mobilization of resources or through alliance building exercises. Strong states with massive endowment of resources could afford to mobilize resources against powerful adversaries. Weak states must come together and join with comparatively strong states to guarantee their security against powerful predators. Most realists argue that states must look at material resources and morale in calculating the 'balance'. In other words, states must balance against actual capabilities and not against anticipated intentions. This is because while capabilities are concrete and thus 'real', intentions are tendentious and ambivalent, liable to be misleading and morphed within quick time. To rely on subjective assessments of intentions against concrete calculations of capabilities imperiled state security as there were no permanent friends or enemies in international relations. But realists are divided over the goals of state behaviour. Defensive realists argue that states seek security and do not need infinite power to get there. Offensive realists disagree and contend that states must aim at maximization of power rather than optimal security. Their point is that while revisionist states would happily hold on to the present distribution of power to guarantee security, the revisionist states would wish to alter the distribution of power itself and seek as much power as may be required to achieve this. There is no way to settle this debate theoretically within the paradigm itself.

One school of realism called the power transition theory does not believe in balance of power to be a categorical attribute of the paradigm. Scholars like Organski and Robert Gilpin argue that in every epoch systems are stabilized by hegemonic state and not by any balance between great powers. Hegemons rise and fall over time due to their growth differential. At critical conjunctures when the rate of a hegemonic power's decline is superseded by the rise of its challenger, systemic wars tend to breakout, moving the system to a new equilibrium, in keeping with the interests of the new hegemonic power. It is the rise of the new hegemon that pacifies and stabilizes the system. The hegemonic power provides the primary public goods and takes up the responsibility to maintain the basic rules of the game. While these two variants are clearly at loggerheads, both emphasize the role of material power held by great powers to stabilize the given order. (Morgenthau 1978: 4-15)

Fourthly, according to realists, realism is not a moral approach to politics. Critiques of realism have routinely censored it for its amoral and immoral character. But a closer scrutiny reveals that realism is not totally barren of values. The realists reify the value of national security. However, on closer examination, there are differences between personal and national security, well appreciated by the realist school. For realists, security, or national security, pre-empts other fundamental norms. Thus, security is understood as providing the very foundation of healthy and productive human society. The need for security arises because some people often violently threaten the physical existence of their fellow beings. Security is therefore essentially thought of as protection against all forms of physical danger or threats to bodily injury of any kind.

However, security also means the preservation of the means of existence, and hence protection against any threat to such means of survival. Personal security is an absolutely essential precondition to the production and successful reproduction of human life. National security, on the other hand, applies to the populations of countries, and it is therefore both a political and a personal good. (Jackson, 2000: 185 – 7.)

The edifice of national security is built upon the prior search for personal security. The classic philosophical defence of this position came from Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes categorically believed that the state was essentially a security arrangement, and its claim to monopoly of legitimate force or authority was justified in terms of its security role. The Hobbesian solution to the problem of domestic insecurity and disorder was to change the organizing principle of the domestic sphere from anarchy to hierarchy. However, this change had a logical, consequential effect of producing international anarchy by creating an international state of nature of armed states. For Hobbes, the price of living with the uncertainties (and wars) of international anarchy was less than undoing the organization of domestic sovereignty along with the principle of hierarchy, as the latter was the only viable ‘statist’ solution to the problem of personal security.

Modern realists understand better the dilemma that the Hobbesian solution has created for mankind: the security of the citizen within comes with insecurity of the people without. However, the realists argue that there is a convenient instrumentality in responding to the demands of international anarchy that guarantees the security of the people, and it is therefore not necessary to jeopardize the security of the citizen by going back to the unbearable anarchy of the state of nature within. What is most significant is to note the realist commitment to the notion of ‘security’ itself, although the solution proposed by the realists is certainly not above scrutiny.

Classical realism, however, did not go uncontested within the discipline. The first major crisis that straddled realism took the form of the behavioural revolution in IR, which challenged the methodological inadequacies of the realist school. But this was a minor skirmish. The behaviouralists neither challenged the realist ontology, nor could they convincingly display their case (Knorr & Rosenau 1969; Hollis & Smith 1990).

The second challenge was more serious. It came from the interdependence scholars like Keohane and Nye and pluralists like Graham T. Allison, who challenged some of the basic assumptions of realism. Keohane and Nye argued that the global system was not anarchical but marked by complex interdependence based on a web of interactions amongst state and various kinds of nonstate actors, and that power considerations did not obsess states, the agenda of international politics was not automatically set, and states were important but not the exclusive actors who mattered in world politics (Keohane and Nye, 1971, 1978). Allison’s work on decision-making challenged the rational and unitary nature of the realist state and concluded that there was no given national interest that was obvious from a decision maker’s point of view. Organisational frames of reference, competitions and haggling amongst crucial players and irrational factors often decided the nature of decisions than the cold, abstract notion of an interest defined by

power (Allison 1971; Allison & Zelikow 1999). Theoretically as well as empirically, the seventies looked bleak for political realism.

The third related crisis came in the form of the dependency challenge. Whereas realists draw attention to power competition between states, the dependency scholars were interested in the questions of the political economy underlying the system of states. They alleged that the mainstream IR theories had no staple political economy: they took the surface phenomenon as real. Somewhat true to their Marxist inspiration, their fundamental departures from the theoretical canons of classical Marxism notwithstanding, the dependency scholars highlighted the critical role of the global economy as the main motor of international relations. They did not disregard the role of the nation-state altogether, but subordinated state activities to the constraints imposed by the existing nature of the political economy. The dependency scholars took a structuralist view of the international system. They took the international structures as essentially capitalist, divided into core and peripheral parts, defined by the degree of development or underdevelopment of the modes of production. The core consisted of great powers while the periphery included the vast majority of the Third World states. Dependency scholars were not conscious IR theoreticians. They wrote primarily from developmental and historical-sociological perspectives. Yet their criticism was equally telling upon the realists. Realism was exposed of having no structural underpinnings, being essentially a theory of superstructures (Frank, 1971; Hobden, 1998; Wallerstein, 1974, 1980, 1989).

By the end of the 1970s the realists bounced back. The counter-offensive came from three distinctive sources. First and foremost, Kenneth Waltz published *The Theory of International Politics (TIP)* in 1979 that marked the most authoritative statement of a structural realist position, popularly dubbed as neo-realism. Second, Robert Gilpin developed the hegemonic stability theory, which provided a distinctive political-economic perspective to realism (1981). Thirdly Stephen Krasner developed a complex theory of regimes that sought to accommodate within realism and its power-centric explanatory framework the role of institutions, norms and practices (1983). By the 80s, realism had reclaimed its dominance within the discipline, and its detractors were surely on the defensive. Yet, neo-realism did not resolve as many problems as it created for its predecessor.

Neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz

Neo-realism is primarily based on the philosophy of classical realism. It had three sources. If political realism provided the primary source of neo-realism, then structuralism definitely contributed as its more immediate source. Structuralism is a complex approach to knowledge dealing primarily with profound epistemological and methodological issues. Structuralism suggests that human behaviour cannot adequately explained by observing surface phenomena, or by examining individual motivations and intention, for in all spheres of human activity invisible structures are precipitated by unconscious human actions. These structures, in process of time, are reproduced by many impersonal actors, without any manifest intention in recreating them.

The sudden spurt of success of structural analysis in disciplines such as Linguistics, Anthropology and Sociology infected and induced neo-realists like Kenneth Waltz to accommodate aspects of structuralism into the realist literature in IR, thus producing a “neo-realist synthesis”.

An indirect source of neo-realism can be located in the gradual development of the economic perspective in the study of IR over the 1970s and 1980s, which brought the ideas of market and firm from macro economic theory in to the discipline of IR. Drawing partially upon neo-classical economics and markedly indebted to the functionalist literature in the field of integration theory, the inter-dependence model, for the first time, effectively challenged the power-centric, realist approach for the latter’s inability to treat economic factors as independent variables in IR. Armed with new concepts such as asymmetry, vulnerability, and sensitivity, the interdependence approach sought to explore the linkages between the political and economic variables in explaining functional cooperation, sectoral integration and systemic change. (Keohane and Nye, 1978: 1-17). The more radical challenge to realist thinking about international economics came from the dependence theorists, who focused variously on the potential or actual exploitative nature of political and economic relations in the given international system composed of sovereign nation states. They view the entire international system as a single global system of world capitalism, bifurcated into core and peripheral processes of capitalist production by the international division of labour. In essence, one may argue, Immanuel Wallerstein’s “world system” perspective is typically structural, for such a system is nothing but “a unit with a single division of labour and multiple cultural systems”. John Gerald Ruggie has found Waltz to mirror this structural perspective of Wallerstein.

The most power and influential statement of neo-realism has come from Kenneth Waltz, who sought to resurrect the flagging fortunes of classical realism by substituting it by a new variant structural realism. The kernel of Waltz’s neo-realist or structural perspective is contained in the following propositions:

- i) A system comprises a structure and interacting units. The structure is the system-wide component that provides identity to the system as whole. (Waltz 1979:79)
- ii) How inter-unit relations and the way units are organized or positioned is the property of the system, unrelated to unit level factors. (Waltz 1979:80)
- iii) The structure of the system acts as a constraining force creating a certain fixed parameter for actions, and hence, system theories posit and predict perpetuation of the given system. (Waltz 1979:72)

Waltz’s concept of political structure consists of three analytical components: (I) the differentiation of units; (II) the specification of their functions; and (III) the degree of concentration or diffusion of capabilities within the system. The essential propositions of neorealism are as follows:

1.(a) The most fundamental feature of the international realm is anarchy, or the absence of central rule. No one is entitled to command, none is enjoined to obey.

(b) The units (states) are functionally alike. Accordingly, as no functional differentiation of states exists, the second component of political structure is irrelevant on the international plane. (c) The placement of the units in the international system varies according to the distribution of capabilities among them rather than in terms of their intrinsic attributes. (Ruggie 1983:265 - 6)

2. International structures are altered only through a simulation of the organizing principle or, short of that, through changes in the capabilities of units. (Waltz 1979: 93)

3. Within-system change occurs through shifts in the configurations of capabilities, i.e. whether one, two, or more powers inhabit the system. Systemic change – produced by the substitution of the structure of anarchy by that of hierarchy – is prevented by the very structure of anarchy itself. (Ruggie 1983:265 - 6)

4. A structural understanding of international politics has to be ‘systemic’ in nature because it is ‘within a system that [the] theory explains recurrences and repetitions, not change’. (Waltz 1979: 93)

Apparently, what Waltz is suggesting is that the identity of the international system cannot be grasped by studying merely the structural properties of the constituent element of the system (i.e., states). The structure has an invisible identity, which needs to be precisely articulated if the grand theory of IR is to go beyond a sense of mystical illusion. It is the basic system “structure” that provides identity to states, and not the other way round. And both continuity and change within the international system are not “exogenous”, rather, it is the system structure that determines the dynamics of both.

As the second-generation of neo-realists and neo-liberals followed Kenneth Waltz, it is necessary to examine the arguments relating to anarchy and balance of power that he postulated. Waltz’s central assumption is typically Hobbesian. He wrote: ‘The state among states, it is often said, conducts its affairs in the brooding shadow of violence. Because some states may at time use force, all states must be prepared to do so – or live at the mercy of their militarily more vigorous neighbours. Among states, the state of nature is a state of war’ (Waltz 1979:102). Nevertheless, Waltz thinks that chaos, destruction, and death are more closely associated with hierarchy (government) than is the case with anarchy. He therefore argues that the criterion for the use of force or the constant fear of its use is not sufficient to explain the domestic/international divide. This has more to do with the different modes of organization in the use of force employed by the government within its territorial limits and states outside in the context of anarchy (Waltz 1979:103).

From this central assumption, Waltz developed several key propositions regarding anarchy. Thus, he seeks to define the formal organization of a sphere, which would decide the possibility (and desirability) of cooperation, interdependence, or integration among units. Within formally

organized realm(s), units are forced to specialize, as the resultant interdependence does not threaten their survival. In a sphere where there is no central, authoritative regulator, benefits of increased specialization become relative. Specialization, therefore, enhances, rather than decreases, competition. The different units become closely interdependent, in direct proportion to the degree of specialization achieved by them. It follows logically, then, that inequality in the distribution of the product (resulting from cooperative behaviour) adversely affects the prospect of an international division of labour. Even the prospect of large absolute gains for both parties is not sufficient to eradicate the fear of an unequal distribution of that gain. A state therefore fears relative gains benefiting its adversary more than itself. (Waltz 1979:105-106).

To summarize, Waltz conceives the international system as a self-help system and treats states as defensive actors, inasmuch as their primary, though not exclusive, intention is self-preservation. Thus, while states are not necessarily self-aggrandizing, they are, compulsively, self-help units, looking for their own security amidst an anarchical milieu where the probability of threat(s) to their survival (as independent states) is always real. Thus states are primarily concerned about their own security and forced to view other states as potential threats. This makes balance of power the sole theory of international politics, which explains fully the systemic or structural logic of the anarchical order. Having ruled out the possibility of any third kind of system, other than the hierarchical and the anarchic, Waltz could confidently speak about the self-perpetuation of the international system, as states can only logically be self-help units within an anarchical system devoid of an authoritative or commanding sovereign regulator. Balance of power is essentially a balance of capabilities, and states have to continually evaluate the capabilities of other states to maintain the balance. Balance, again, is defined by the number of poles in the balance, which refer to the number of states which can seriously threaten the existence of others. Waltz, contrary to many other neo-realists (and realists), thought that the bipolar balance was the ideal mechanism for the international system as it was easier to manage with a fewer number of interested and capable players involved.

Balance of power remains the central concept of neo-realists. I have already discussed some of the major aspects of Waltz's formulation relating to the balance of power theory. In this context, it is worth recalling Waltz's insistence that if there is any political theory of international politics, it is the theory of balance of power. He explains balance of power by two factors, structure and anarchy and, unlike Hans J. Morgenthau, claims it to be a law. Thus, for Waltz, balance of power is not the result of successful diplomacy; rather, it arises out of the logic of the very structure of the international system. Subsequently, Waltz's formulations on the subject have come in for closer examination and detailed research. Some more recent neo-realist scholars have found fault with some of these formulations and have offered alternative explanations. However, none of these scholars dismiss the research agenda of neo-realism on the ground of limitations they have detected. They have instead tended to strengthen the realist position so much that it now seems virtually unassailable.

What can a state do when faced by a powerful adversary or a coalition of adversaries? Waltzian neo-realism is quite unequivocal here. The states, in an anarchical system, balance one another and do not bandwagon. Simply expressed, states, when faced with opposition from strong adversaries, oppose the 'adversary' and do not join the strongest power. Waltz argues that bandwagoning refers to allying with the stronger power, i.e., the one capable of establishing hegemony. Balance of power theory believes that such an alliance will be dangerous for the survival of the weaker states and therefore they should instead (of bandwagoning) oppose or try to balance against the hegemon. Stephen Walt has conducted empirical studies to validate this crucial assumption by examining the alliance formation pattern in West Asia between 1955 and 1979 and that of India and Pakistan (Walt 1988: 275 - 316). Walt's findings support Waltz's central proposition that states normally balance and do not bandwagon. In Walt's words: 'These studies revealed that states form alliances primarily to balance against other states, and that 'bandwagoning' behaviour – that is, alignment with the dominant state or coalition – was relatively rare'(Walt 1988: 277)

It is however instructive to note that whereas Waltzian structural balance of power theory defines balance (and bandwagon) simply in terms of capabilities. Walt seeks to define these concepts by threat. Walt argues that capabilities alone cannot explain balancing or bandwagoning behaviour of states. He maintains: 'By focusing solely on the distribution of capabilities, structural balance-of-power theory ignores the other factors that statesmen will consider when making alliance ... as a result, the theory cannot explain why balances often fail to form' (Walt 1988: 279). Walt therefore modifies a crucial assumption of the structural theory. In his words, states 'seek allies to balance threats, and that power is merely one element in their calculations – albeit an important one'. (Walt 1988: 279). Accordingly, 'an imbalance of threat occurs when the most threatening state or coalition is significantly more dangerous than the second most threatening state or coalition' (Walt, 1988: 280). The degree of threat depends upon aggregate power, geographic distance/proximity, offensive capability, and the aggressive intent of a threatening state or a coalition. The case studies Walt undertook reinforce his thesis: states are found balancing against threats not against capabilities, and unless factors such as distance, intention, and offensive capabilities are sufficiently factored in, there could be no accurate and substantive explanation of their behaviour.

Most significantly, his treatment of the subject is so intricate and subtle, that it successfully turns choice into inevitability. The essence of Waltzian structuralism lies in the fact that he links the life of the balance of power theory to the prevailing condition of structural anarchy itself. Thus balance of power can be avoided in either of the two most unlikely circumstances – either the survival instinct of states in a condition of unregulated anarchy must disappear or the structure of anarchy itself has to change

To summarize,

Waltz conceives the international system as self-help system and treats states as defensive actors inasmuch as their primary, though not exclusive, intention is selfpreservation. Thus, while states are not necessarily self-aggrandizing, they are compulsively selfhelp units, looking for their own security amidst an anarchical milieu where the probability of threat(s) to their survival (as independent states) is always real. Thus states are primarily concerned about their own security and forced to view other states as potential threats. This makes balance of power the only theory of international politics, which explains fully the systemic or structural logic of the anarchical order. Having ruled out the possibility of any third kind of system – other than the hierarchical and the anarchic – Waltz could confidently talk of the self-perpetuation of the internal system, as states can only logically be self-help units within an anarchical system devoid of an authoritative or commanding sovereign regulator. Balance of power is essentially a balance of capabilities and states have to continuously judge the capabilities of other states to maintain the balance. Balance, again, is defined by the number of poles in the balance, which refer to the number of states who can seriously threaten the existence of other. Waltz, contrary to many other neo-realists (and realists), thought that the bipolar balance was the ideal mechanism for the international system since it was easier to manage with a lesser number of interested and capable players involved.

Waltz is categorical that he does not seek to provide a theory of foreign policy, and therefore, his perspective will not account for major variations at state level interactions which were caused by local or specific factors and thus irreducible to the systems level (Waltz, 1996; Telhami, 2002). What is the value of neo-realism, then, as a theory of security, if it cannot explain major foreign policy outcomes in different parts of the world? Waltz, apparently, does not think that it is a cause of embarrassment for his theory if it fails to account for specific foreign policy variations. In his defence, he provided a two-fold text for his theory and claimed that neo-realism successfully possesses both of them. First, he emphatically pointed out that no theory can ever claim to explain “everything” and neo-realism was no exception. Second, the validity of neorealism did not depend on empirical cases; its validity rested on the internal consistency of propositions constituting the theory and its utility depended on its capacity to generate a sophisticated research programme on security at the systems level. For Waltz, it was sufficient to establish that, contrary to the claims of the interdependency, functionalist and pluralist scholars, there was no fundamental change in the logic of the system, and the fact that such an alteration was not possible without the contemporary international system changing from anarchical into a hierarchical one. At a normative level, neo-realism did not rule out the possibility of an eventual transformation of the anarchical self-help system into a world government based on collective security, no more than its predecessor, classical realism, had conceded the logical or theoretical possibility and normative desirability to substitute a balance of power system based on threats and counter-threats for a new world order or a stateless society with perfect cooperation at all levels. However, the primary endeavour of the neo-realist intervention was to precisely deny the possibility of any alteration in the anarchical system, a denial which was not based on the amorality, or inherent wickedness, of a handful of crafty statesmen, a la classical realism, but on the structural attributes of the system and the logic of survival of the units.

Although realism remains the most powerful paradigm in International Relations, it does not represent an undifferentiated and consistent body of thought (Gilpin, 1984; Donnelly 2000, Brooks, 1997; Smith 1986). Realism is informed by divergent assumptions, and these in turn engender distinctive implications. Commenting on this diversity, Glenn H. Snyder remarked: 'The field of international relations now has at least two varieties of "structural realism", probably three kinds of offensive realism, and several types of defensive realism; in addition to "neoclassical", "contingent", "specific" and "generalist" realism' (Snyder, Glenn H, 2002: 149 - 50). All modern realists, however, agree on a set of assumptions. Unlike classical realists, they all offer structural explanations, although their degree of structural determination varies. Realists also share a broadly conflictual view of international politics and describe states' behaviour in competitive terms. Selfhelp and individualism are also shared assumptions for all realists, although their specific connotations seem to vary. These similarities do not however tell us what different realists have to say about specific state behaviour. Part of the problem of course, inheres in a central ambiguity, if not total silence, in the realist understanding of structure. The realists (structural) have apparently two meanings of structure. The first refers to any configuration of the international system. Measured by the distribution of capabilities, system structures can be unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar. Another meaning of structure refers to the deep structure of the international system, i.e. anarchy. The problem is that realists seem to use these distinctive meanings interchangeably.

Although all realists share this fundamental premise, they tend to differ considerably on what follows from anarchy. This is because structural realism drops the psychological dimension of its classical counterpart. Anarchy leads to differential implications because realists differ on the kind of actors who inhabit such an anarchic realm. Realists like Mearsheimer take an extremely pessimistic view of these actors (Mearsheimer, 2001). In a way they are truer to the original spirit of classical realism à la Morgenthau, minus the latter's explicit psychological formulations. Accordingly, offensive realists paint a fearful fresco of interminable conflict between states that must be exploitative, hateful, cynical, and hegemonic in orientation. Defensive realists operate with a much more relaxed view of anarchy. For them, states are egotists but are not cynical or inherently exploitative, eternally restless, or inevitably hegemonic in character. Many of the other finer differences issue from this basic dichotomy

Critique of Realism

First, the ideology has a pessimistic view of human nature, seeing man essentially as evil, individualistic, greedy and what Hans Morgenthau calls *animus dominandi*; the human 'lust' of power. The human *animus dominandi* dictates that men and women are by nature political animals; they are born to pursue power and enjoy the fruits of their power, however this will inevitably bring men and women into conflict with each other. In this sense, Realism becomes an ideology based on paranoia and fear of being dominated and vanquished. But there is little evidence of unending conflicts in most parts of the world. There would be little development if we are always in a constant state of fear and conflict. The fact is that there is actually more

cooperation to conflict and most states are far more relaxed vis-à-vis others contrary to the prescriptions of realism. This critique however is partially true; for great power behaviour in world politics is often based on realist precepts. Moreover, realists are not arguing that conflicts would necessary erupt; they talk more in terms of conflict potential and dynamics that influence the policies of states. (Bandyopadhyaya, 1993).

The assumptions of classical realism of Morgenthau in particular seem problematic as there cannot be any objective and scientific validation of human nature and psycho-pathology of states. There is also the related problem of extrapolating individual traits on to macro entities like states. The realist positions on morality and ethics has also been seriously questioned. On one hand, realism contrasts power and morality that is hardly tenable theoretically since all notions of power build on certain moral standards. On the other, realist precepts tend to dwarf the normative dimensions of international relations and tend to rationalize behaviour unconcerned with moral and ethical development of the people. This breeds a culture of pessimism and conservatism that prevents deeper relations across states and societies. But states are not only competitors in an anarchical system; they are also partners of a global civil society bound by international law. Theorists of the English school (International Society approach) show how states are influenced both by material/systemic factors and normative constraints. States are both rational and social and, like individuals, have legitimate interests that others can recognize and respect, and find observing a principle of reciprocity in their mutual relations as beneficial to them. The notion of benefits is not necessarily as narrow as the realists tell us; mutual recognition, respect and legitimacy of ideas are equally potent benefits for states.

The realist case for ‘anarchy problematique’ has been challenged by constructivists like Wendt. While many scholars agree that the international realm is without a legitimate body of authority, the meaning and consequences of such a fact are not necessarily based on realist injunctions. Countering neorealist ideas Wendt argues that self-help does not follow logically or casually from the principle of anarchy. It is socially constructed. Wendt therefore says, “self-help and power politics are institutions, and not essential features of anarchy. Anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt 1987: 395). Thus Wendt argues that anarchy is a form of social culture which is constituted by agents and whose meaning varies across time and space. Thus anarchy of enemies is different from anarchy of rivals or friends.

The realists are divided over the role of domestic politics. Classical and neorealists tend to underplay its significance. In fact, Kenneth Waltz in his seminal text *Man, State and Fear* argued that neither personalities nor state structures explain the continuity in state behaviour across millennia. The standard realist ploy is to contrast anarchy and hierarchy as two opposed modes of organizing space. But neo-classical realists have accepted the pivotal role played by domestic factors in shaping foreign policies of states. (Rose, 1998: 144–72). They have shown how concepts like security dilemma and alliance making are critically related to domestic considerations and political compulsions. Moreover, liberals and pluralists have exposed the superficiality of the statist perspective held by realists. They have documented how domestic

preferences have shaped state's attitude to neighbours in several major areas and the critical role played by key institutions and leaders/bureaucrats in the decision making processes pertaining to foreign affairs. Constructivists have corroded the realist claim to unitary national interest, while liberals, Marxists and critical theorists have analyzed how national interest is defined, claimed and legitimated by dominant interests and groups in society. Most realists are unable to account for the role of domestic variables in any systematic manner. But many new generation realists are far more attentive to this chronic deficiency of their approach and some recent realist scholarship has attempted bridge the divide in areas like security dilemma, grand strategy and coalition building.

The realist idea of balance of power is also fraught with many conceptual ambiguities and contradictions. For instance, theorists like Organski and Vasquez, among many others, have shown that concept means many things to many people, has been deployed differently by Morgenthau in different contexts, and is mathematically imprecise and historically controversial. The constant refinement and emendations in the concepts of balance (and alliances) have made the concept immune to falsification and considerably compromised its analytical worth.

Neo-liberals contend that state behavior is caused less by anarchy and more by institutions, learning, and other factors that encourage cooperation. Scholars like Robert Keohane and Robert Axelrod accepted Waltz's central assumptions like the international order being anarchical, states being rational and egoistic actors who work for their own benefit, but demonstrated that states can widen the perception of their self-interest through economic cooperation and involvement in international institutions. (Keohane, 1983, 1986; Axelrod, 1984). Realists are unable to understand how cobwebs of interactions and complex interdependence affect world politics.

Critical theorists, such as Robert W. Cox, target neorealism for its failure to explain change. Critical theorists argue that realists err by taking historically determined state-based structure of international relations as a timeless universal category. In contrast, critical theorists take us to the creative interplay of ideas, material factors, and social forces as way to understand the genealogy of structures and their possible transformation. Realism unfortunately legitimates the existing status quo of strategic relations among states and thus rationalizes the politics of the dominant. Critical theorists also negate the underlying positivistic and scientific methods of realists. Cox for example denies theories being objective and neutral. In all systems the dominant defines moral standards and the regime of truth. Hence, all orders are exclusionary in effect, reflecting a built-in interest in domination and control. (Cox, 1981, 1983).

Realism, particularly neorealism, has been severely criticized by post-modern and post-structural scholars of IR. The works of Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, among many, have criticized the assumptions, methodology, and central attributes of neorealism (Devetak, 1996). They have found neorealism a departure from the classical heritage, and targeted its scientific, rational, objective, and empiricist cast. They have also found the realist understanding of power narrow and superficial, unable to explain the processes of subjectification and how power creates its own

field of play. These scholars have denied the sanctity of the domestic/international divide, calling it a false dichotomy. Perhaps most significantly, they have accused realism of creating a discourse within which the conventional categories of the discipline acquire meaning. They argue that alternative ideas cannot flourish with the discipline given the epistemic hegemony of realism as 'the theory' that gospels fundamental truths of international politics. (Ashley, 1984; Walker, 1991).

Feminist scholars have also criticized realism. An important component of both Morgenthau's and Kenneth Waltz's theory is their intellectual lineage to early realist thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Feminist analysis of this genre has revealed that this exercise has always been built on hyper-masculinity underlying a militarized conceptualization of the state that relegates the feminine as a symbolic threat. Feminists argue that early state formation marked the effective centralization of political authority and accumulation processes, which were achieved by the institutionalization of gender exploitation and ideological legitimization of such gendered practices. Not only national politics, but also the theory and practice of international war and peace has been gendered throughout modern history, and the gendered elements at all levels of world politics are crucial causal and constitutive factors in causing war (Sjoberg, 2012). Feminists have also argued that the structure of the international system is gender-hierarchical and not anarchical. For many feminists the deep 'structure of international politics' is the gender divide, gender inequalities within a state are constitutive of aggressiveness in international relations, and gender subordination rather than power competition among states is a constant part of human nature and the defining motor of international interaction (Blanchard, 2003:1296) (Tickner, 1992:58) (Sjoberg, 2012)