

POLS 318: Theories of IR
Lecture 5 (09.03.2020):
Material Theories v.2.

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Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Material theories - Neorealism
- 3 Structural Theories - PTT
- 4 The Public Angle
- 5 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Material theories: system level of analysis
- Realism:
 - Core principles.
 - The concept of **Power**.
 - *Balance of Power* - Multipolarity before 1914.
- Neorealism:
 - Reductionist structural theory.
 - Security - not power.
 - Anarchy.
 - Bipolar world (cold war).

Questions?? Email me!

Neorealism (Waltz 1979)

REALISM 2.0?

- Advanced version of classic realism.
- International system → state behavior.
- Simplifying assumptions enhance structural framework.
- Parsimony - Accuracy.

Assumptions

- ① Anarchy and self-help.
- ② States - primary actors in international politics.
- ③ Maximize *Security*.
- ④ Increase power only if no security risk.

The Security Dilemma

The means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others (Jervis 1978)

- Pursuit of influence → harms others' security.
- Why a dilemma?

Key Themes

- ① Conflict in anarchic system (Spiral model).
- ② Offensive - defensive balance (and differentiation).

The Security Dilemma

TRIGGERING INSECURITY

(1) Arms race

- Increase in arms makes rival less powerful.
- Incentives for rival to arm/balance.
- Offensive / Defensive increase.
- Signaling intentions ("greedy" behavior).
- Increase in force: size and types.

The Security Dilemma

TRIGGERING INSECURITY

(2) Incentives for expansion

- Insecure rival → expand to compensate.
- Resources, strategic depth, secure borders.
- NATO enlargement into central and east Europe (Russian actions).

RISKS FROM MISPERCEPTIONS

- Intentions and spiral escalation.
- Wrong interpretation of arms increases.

The Security Dilemma

Israel - UAR Tensions (1960)



War and the Security dilemma

OFFENSIVE - DEFENSIVE BALANCE

Offense dominates → **higher risks for war:**

- War is viewed as quick & profitable.
- Expansion is viewed as profitable.
- First strike and preemption.
- Example: Germany and WW1.

Limitations and Challenges

Neorealism

- Abstract, ignores details.
- Less attention to 'lower-level' interactions.
- Survival → not the only interest.

Security Dilemma

- Inconsistent logic - uncertainty.
- Offensive realism.

Power Transition Theory

BASICS

- Focus → strongest states and their interactions.
- Status-Quo and power concepts.
- Dominant state: sets order (political, economic, military, etc.).
- Importance of control over rules of the system.
- Benefits from existing order.

Power Transition Theory

Global interactions under PTT

- Structure: Hierarchy with several 'clusters' of states.
- Sources of dominant state: economic and military power.
- Satisfied and Dissatisfied states.
- *Relative power.*
- War over control over 'rules of the game'.
- Unlike realism - power is not enough!

Dominant State



International system post-1945

USA - a global giant

- Setting the rules...
- Economic: *Bretton Woods*, GATT, WTO.
- Politics: democratic institutions, human rights.
- Military: NATO, UN-supported limited interventions.

Power Transition Theory

Conditions for War

- Dissatisfied nation and relative power.
- Costly war (potentially system altering).
- Rivals equal in power → power transition.
- Realist BOP under the PTT view.
- Conditions that **prevent war**:
 - ① Preemptive attack by dominant power.
 - ② Rising power delays conflict until ready.

Power Transition Theory

Empirical evidence

- Germany in WW2.
- UK - US at the end of 19th century.
- Measures: alliance portfolio gaps, military expenditures.

The Cold war and beyond (Lemke 1997)

- The challenger (USSR) never achieved parity.
- Soviet failure to sustain competition.
- USSR and the *Internal growth* stage
- Post cold-war peace: most states are satisfied.
- Dissatisfied but lack power (Russia, China) - less so today.

Public views

Is Realism real? (Kertzer and McGraw 2012)

- Realist views - predominant in academic and political circles (*Realpolitik*).
- Citizens and views of realist behavior - inconsistent evidence.

Challenge

- Public interpretation → "folk realism".
- Potential mechanisms: uncertainty and fear.

Realism in the Public eye

The Microfoundations of folk realism - a belief?

- Information gaps → prudent behavior.

Findings: ▶ Measures1 ▶ Measures2

- 1 Realism and political orientation (ideology, nationalism, militarism).
- 2 Trust - social and international.
- 3 Preference for conformity, social order and inequality.
- 4 No knowledge needed!! (at least some)

Public views

Act as a Realist?

- Mechanisms of realist behavior.
- Experimental design (scenario: ethnic conflict).
- Uncertainty and Emotions.

Findings: ▶ Behavior

- ① Realism views and information.
- ② Interaction of folk realism and anger emotion.

Structural Theories - Summary



Recommended readings

More studies on material theories as PTT:

- 1 Douglas Lemke and Jacek Kugler, "The Evolution of the Power Transition Perspective" in Lemke and Kugler eds., *Parity and War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996) pp. 3-34
- 2 Seva Gunitsky, "From Shocks to Waves: Hegemonic Transitions and Democratization in the Twentieth Century", *International Organization* 68:3 (2014), 561-597.
- 3 Fiammenghi, Davide. "The Security Curve and the Structure of International Politics: A Neorealist Synthesis." *International Security* 35:4 (2011): 126-154.

Mid-term Task

Some details

- Course topic - real world illustrations.
- Due date: **October 2nd** at midnight (eCampus assignments).
- By yourself!

Example: Power in IR

- Present main arguments, assumptions and implications for system structure.
- Real world realist behavior: South-China-Sea; Russia-Ukraine.
- Short discussion on each example - how it illustrates theory?

Microfoundations - Folk Realism

What's more important to you?

Promoting human rights abroad/improving security at home
(58.8%)

Upholding international law/protecting American corporations
(33.9%)

Opening up trade with foreign countries/increasing American
military might (19.4%)

Encouraging the spread of democracy abroad/restricting the flow
of weapons of mass destruction (61.8%)

In your opinion, countries...

Are inherently cooperative/are inherently aggressive (41.2%)

Can often be persuaded by international organizations like the
United Nations/can only be persuaded by the use of force
(26.1%)

Should be able to trust other states/should never trust other
states (13.9%)

Microfoundations - Folk Realism

Should only use military force for defensive purposes/should be prepared to use military force for any purpose (33.3%)

Should pay less attention to power and arms races/should pay less attention to treaties and institutions (15.2%)

In your opinion, war...

Usually occurs because different countries have different values/occurs because different countries have clashing interests (76.4%)

Can usually be avoided/is usually unavoidable (18.2%)

Tends to make problems worse/often fulfills a useful purpose (34.5%)

Should always be of last resort/is a legitimate way to settle disputes (6.1%)

Folk Realism Behavior

1. The Sunnis and Shi'as in Iraq (the Azeris and Armenians) have been fighting one another for many years. The United States should deploy more forces in Iraq (deploy forces) to help maintain a ceasefire between the two groups.
2. If Iraq becomes (Armenia and Azerbaijan become) more democratic, tensions between the Sunnis and Shi'as (Azeris and Armenians) will decrease.
3. The Kurds in the north of Iraq would like to declare independence from the rest of the country. (N/K declared independence from Azerbaijan in 1991, but has yet to have its independence recognized by any other state). The United States should take the first step in recognizing Kurdish (N/K's) independence, even though other countries might see this as interfering in domestic affairs.
4. Because the Sunnis and Shi'as (Azeris and Armenians) have been fighting for so long, it isn't worth it for the United States to pay such heavy costs to try to reach a settlement.
5. The conflict in Iraq (Azerbaijan) is likely to resolve itself over the next couple of years.