**Realism Theory of International Relations**

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**Realism:**

**Introduction:**

* According to **realism,** states work only to increase their own power relative to that of other states.
* According to Jonathan Haslam, professor of history of international relations at the University of Cambridge,

*“Realism is a is a spectrum of ideas which revolve around the four central propositions of Political Groupism, Egoism, International anarchy and Power politics.”*

* For Realists, global politics is about power and self interest.
* Therefore, it is often portrayed as a ‘power politics’ model of international politics.

**Theory of Power Politics:**

Based on two core assumptions;

1. People are essentially selfish and competitive, meaning that ‘egoism’ is the defining characteristic of human nature.
2. The State-system operates in a context of international anarchy, in that there is no authority higher than the sovereign state.

**Egoism**: Concern for one’s own interest or wellbeing, or selfishness; the belief that one’s own interests are morally to those of others.

**Realism claims:**

* Power: The world is a harsh and dangerous place. The only certainty in the world is power. A powerful state will always be able to outdo—and outlast—weaker competitors. The most important and reliable form of power is military power.
* Self-preservation: A state’s primary interest is self-preservation. Therefore, the state must seek power and must always protect itself.
* Moral behavior: Moral behavior is very risky because it can undermine a state’s ability to protect itself.
* War: The international system itself drives states to use military force and to war. Leaders may be moral, but they must not let moral concerns guide foreign policy.
* International Law: International organizations and law have no power or force; they exist only as long as states accept them.
* Enforcing Global Rule: There is no overarching power that can enforce global rules or punish bad behavior.

**Summarising Realism:**

The key themes within realism are as follows;

* State egoism and conflict
* Statecraft and the national interest
* International anarchy and its implications
* Polarity, stability and the balance of power

**Application of Realism:**

* Politicians have practiced realism as long as states have existed.
* Most scholars and politicians during the Cold War viewed international relations through a realist lens.
* Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union trusted the other, and each sought allies to protect itself and increase its political and military influence abroad.
* Realism has also featured prominently in the administration of George W. Bush.

**Classical Realism:**

* A form of realism that explains power politics largely in terms of human selfishness or egoism.
* Simply, it says that it is among the fundamental aspects of human nature to ‘drive for power’ and ‘dominate others’.

**Neo-Realism or Structural Realism:**

* Neo-Realism is derived from classical realism.
* However, instead of ‘human nature’, its focus is predominantly on the ‘anarchic structure’ of the international system.

**Offensive Realists Vs Defensive Realists**

**Offensive Realists**

* In order to ensure survival, States will have to seek maximization of their power relative to others.
* If rival countries possess enough power to threaten a State, it can never be safe.
* Hegemonyis thus the best strategy for a country to pursue, if it can.

**Defensive Realists**

* Domination is an unwise strategy for State survival.
* Seeking hegemony may bring a State into dangerous conflicts with its peers.
* Polarity’—the distribution of power amongst the Great Powers—is thus a key concept in Realist theory.

**Famous Realists**

**Niccolo Machiavelli: (**May 1469 – June 1527)

* An Italian historian, politician, diplomat, philosopher and writer during the Renaissance.
* Regarded as one of the founders of modern political science and more specifically political ethics.
* His Masterpiece: The Prince (1513).
* "Machiavellianism" is a widely-used negative term to characterize unscrupulous politicians of the sort Machiavelli described in The Prince.
* The term "Machiavellian" is often associated with deceit, deviousness, ambition, and brutality.

**Thomas Hobbes: (**April 1588 – December 1679)

* English philosopher
* Famous Work: Leviathan (1651)
* A champion of ‘absolutism’ for the sovereign.

**Hans Morgenthau: (**(February, 1904 – July, 1980)

* Leading twentieth-century figures in the study of international politics**.**
* Famous Work: Politics among Nations (1948)
* Strongly opposed the U.S. role in the Vietnam War
* According to Morgenthau,’ Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining, and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action’.
* He advocated an emphasis on ‘realistic’ diplomacy, based on an analysis of balance of power and the need to the national interest.

**Kenneth Waltz:** (June, 1924 – May, 2013)

* American political scientist
* Famous Work: Man, the State and War
* He is a founder of neorealism, or structural realism.
* Waltz argues that the world exists in a state of perpetual international anarchy.
* He further argues that the interaction of sovereign states can be explained by the pressures exerted on them by the anarchic structure of the international system, which limits and constrains their choices
* According to Waltz, proliferation of nuclear weapons would increase the probability of international peace.

**Criticism:**

* Realism considers international system only as an anarchic system.
* Classic Realism presents a negative image of human nature because of selfishness.
* If Human nature can explain only war and dispute, then how to explain peace and cooperation.
* According to anti-realists, Realism doesn’t ‘anticipate’ present relations in the world policy. For example, collapse of Soviet Union, disarmament, global cooperation, international integration, democratic revolution.
* Realism has insufficient suggestion in the changing world
* Realism’s description and explanation of power are widely criticized by other theorists.
* Realisms no doubt worked well during ‘cold war’ era as Cold war was characterized by Hegemonic struggle among great powers
* However nowadays political problems are related to environmental pollution, interdependence, AIDS, destruction of ozone, increase population, narcotic smuggling, international dept problem, human rights etc. In this respect, realist theory is not the leader of international relations area and doesn’t solve global problems