

# Crisis Diplomacy

## Theories of International Politics

January 13, 2015

# Today's Agenda

- 1. Your questions for me.**
- 2. What makes a theory?**
- 3. A brief introduction to realism.**

Your

Questions

for me

**What are you expecting  
from this class?**

**What are your criteria for  
short papers?**

**What are the exams going to be like if they are open-book and open-notes?**

**What's your specific area of interest/nation of focus?**

**What are you specifically interested in? What are you researching now?**

**Have you ever worked in  
international affairs and  
experienced crisis  
diplomacy firsthand?**



**Why is diplomacy failing to resolve the problems today in Syria, Ukraine, etc.? What institutions are missing that diplomacy needs to be more successful?**

**Are there cases where diplomacy simply cannot work?**

What makes a  
**Theory?**

# Definition

**A theory is a logically coherent set of statements that explain some fact (or facts).**

**This Is Not a Theory**

**Democracies will never go to war with one another.**

# **This Is a Theory**

**A democratic government only does what the majority wants.**

**War is costly to the public, so a majority will not support initiating a war.**

**Therefore, democracies will never go to war with one another.**

# The Purposes of Scientific Theories

- **Make sense of facts we've already discovered.**
- **Show why things may not be what they seem.**
- **Suggest where we should go looking next.**

# Evaluating Theories

- Does the conclusion follow from the premises?
- Assumptions: *parsimony* versus *plausibility*.
- What other implications does the theory have?  
How well do they fit reality?

**Essentially, all models are  
wrong, but some are  
useful.**

**— George E.P. Box, statistician, 1987.**



# Creating Theories

**There's no wrong way ... as long as**

- 1. It's logically coherent.**
- 2. You don't test a theory using data that inspired it!**



A brief introduction to

# Realism

# Realism

**The most prominent (and most contested) theory of international politics.**

**Morgenthau's work is prototypically realist.**

# **Realist Assumptions**

- 1. There is an international system consisting of sovereign states.**
- 2. The international system is anarchical.**
- 3. The main national interest of every state is to preserve its own security and autonomy.**
- 4. In international politics, states always prioritize this national interest.**

# Realist Conclusions

- **International conflict is inevitable.**
- **Peace is most likely when there is a balance of power.**

# For Next Time

- We'll look at the role of diplomacy in realism and liberalism (a theoretical alternative to realism)**
- Read Keohane and Nye 2000, "Realism and Complex Interdependence" (download from Blackboard)**

# Image Sources

— Reese's Cups: Michael Verhoef, via **Flickr**