

**REALISM**

# WHAT IS REALISM?

- ▮ Realism is considered the most dominant school of thought in international relations.
- ▮ It is the exercise of power by states towards each and is also known as “power politics” or “real politik”.
- ▮ All Realists share a belief that states are unitary rational actors that are motivated by the desire for military power and security rather than ideals or ethics.
- ▮ Realists view human nature as selfish, conflictual and competitive and believe that states are inherently aggressive (offensive realism) and obsessed with security (defensive realism)
- ▮ Realism values order and does not welcome change (it is status quo oriented)

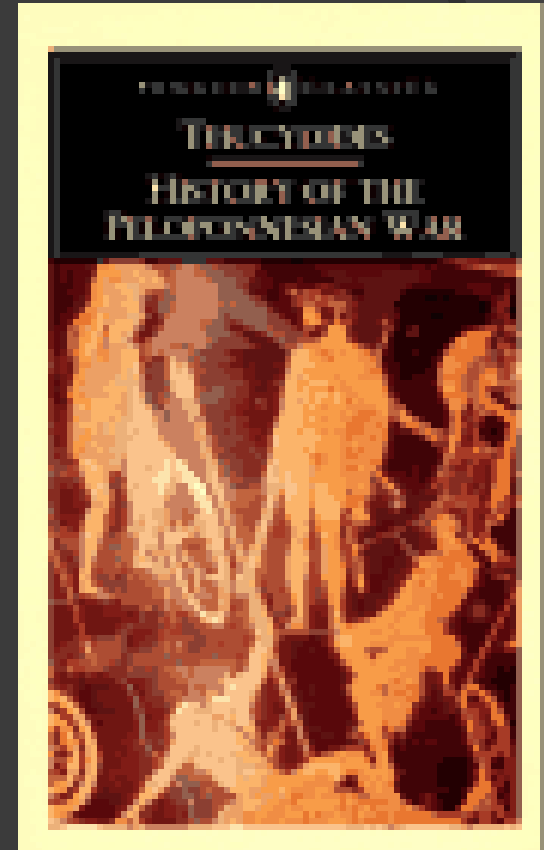
# HISTORY OF REALISM

- ▢ The theory of the realism in IR has been developed throughout the history by famous political philosophers such as Thucydides (the founder of the school) , Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes and closer to our times, in the late 1930s, E.H. Carr.

# THEORISTS OF REALISM

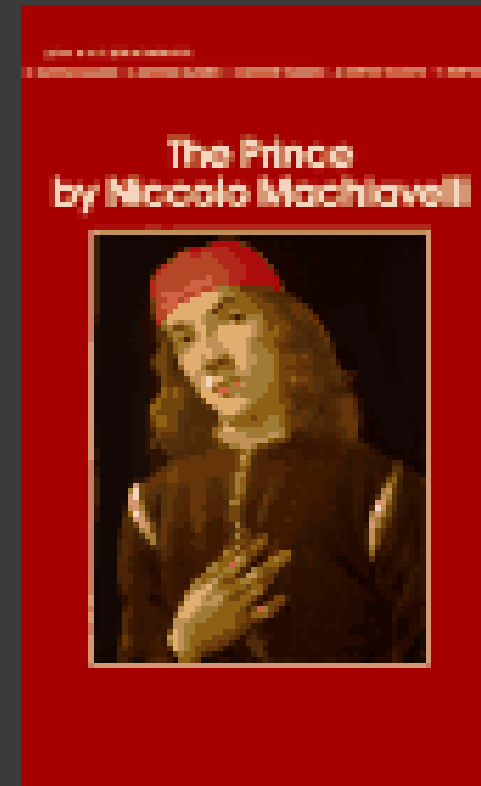
## 1. Thucydides:

- Is portrayed as the founder of the school.
- In his book “History of the Peloponnesian war” he mentioned that the main reason for this war was the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta. (security dilemma)



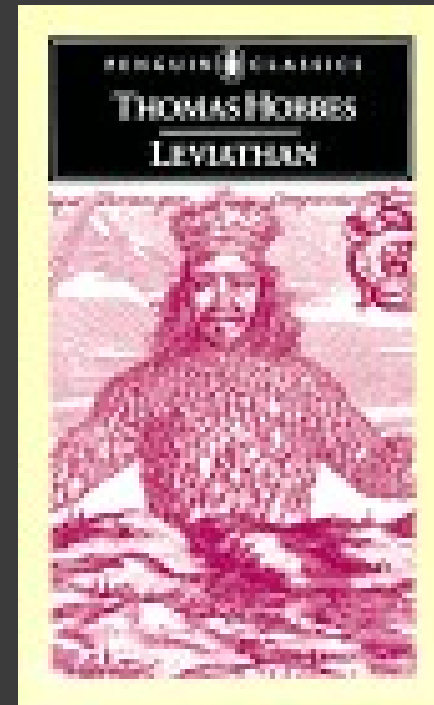
## 2. Machiavelli

- Realism of Thucydides became so popular that until early 1500s no person could share the status of Thucydides.
- In those times Machiavelli was widely condemned for his cynical advice on the way government should be conducted.
- He wrote a book "The Prince" in which he introduced many policies of realism



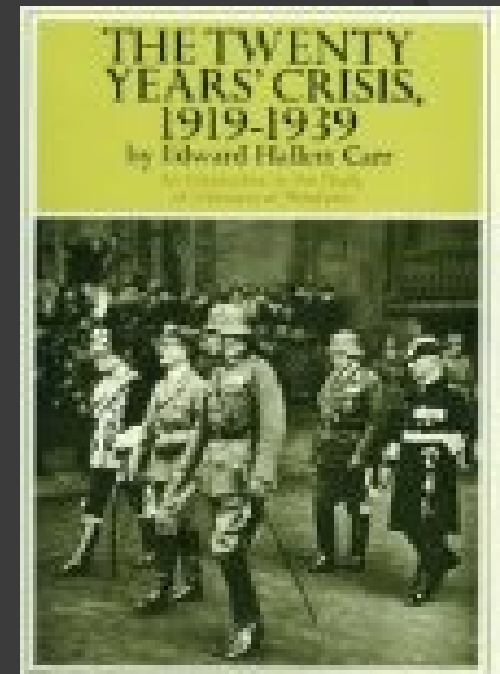
# 3. Thomas Hobbes

- A famous philosopher who promoted Realism through his writings and introduced realist terms like Balance of power, real politik.
- His book “Hobbes Leviathan” helped in establishing the modern system of states.



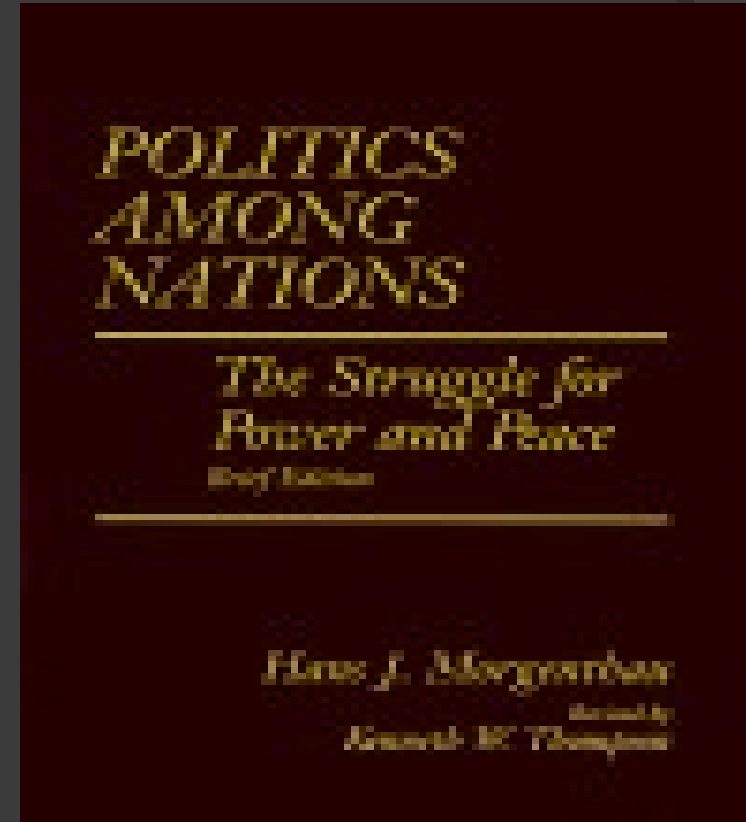
## 4. E.H.Carr

- ▮ Famous historian who launched an attack on liberal principles right after world war 1.
- ▮ He gave a systematic approach to realist school of thought and criticized the liberalist approach.
- ▮ In his book “twenty years crisis” he introduced a critical and cynical concept, realism and placed emphasis on the acceptance of facts and the analysis of their causes and consequences



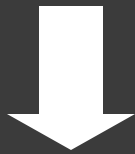
# 5. Hans.J.Morgenthau

- Morgenthau is known for systemizing classical realism. One of his most famous works include “Politics among nations” which became the standard text book and continued to be reprinted after his death.
- Morgenthau presented a theory of international politics which is based on the following six points:
  1. IR is governed by laws that have their roots in human nature.
  2. States have particular interests, i.e. to maximize power.
  3. Interests of states are permanent.
  4. States are the only actors in IR.
  5. There is no universal code of ethics or morality.
  6. Politics is autonomous. It has its own rules and principles which are different from ethics and morality.



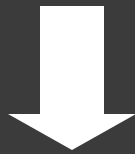


# BRANCHES OF REALISM



## Classical realism

A conservative theory that considers states the only actors and give imp. to military power and maximization of power.



## Neorealism

A theory developed by Kenneth Waltz in which states seek to survive within an anarchical system, international structure.



## Defensive realism

those who argue that states are security maximizers



## Offensive realism

those who argue that states are power maximizers

# The three 'S' of Realism

- ▮ 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 juridical 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).

# The three 'S' of Realism

- ▮ 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?

# The three 'S' of Realism

- ▮ 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.

# COMPARISON OF REALISM AND LIBERALISM

## REALISM

1. States are the only actors at international level.
2. States are rational actors and aim for their own self interest/ relative gain.
3. Realists believe in maximizing military power in order to achieve peace and security.
4. Realists believe in the concept of armament, i.e. states should have arms and weapons for self security.
5. According to realists international system is anarchic in nature.

## LIBERALISM

1. States are not the only actors. Other actors e.g. individuals, IOs, MNCs also play an important role.
2. States are not rational actors. They aim for absolute gain.
3. Liberalists believe that security can be achieved by cooperation, mutual gaining, applying moral/ethical principles.
4. Liberalists believe in the concept of disarmament for self security i.e. cooperation.
5. According to liberalists international system is community based.

# CRITICISM

The theory of Realism is criticized on the following points:

- ▮ Does not talk about change and is status quo oriented.
- ▮ It gives a lot of importance to military power and ignores other forces e.g ethics, economic power
- ▮ Considers states as the only actor and does not recognize other important actors
- ▮ Talks about IR in terms of maximizing power, non cooperation and wars.
- ▮ Focuses on already constructed realities and doesn't think critically.

# CONCLUSION

Despite the opinion of its critics, realism is the most dominant theory used to explain the nature of the International Relations. It is widely accepted because:

- a. It gives a more realistic and practical approach as compared to liberalism to understand IR.
- b. It gives complete description and explanation of international events unlike liberalism which is restricted to only morals and ethics.
- c. It helps in predicting human nature and behaviour which helps in predicting possible outcomes of cooperation among states.