

Realism

- Inherently conflictual nature of international politics
- Realism has significantly influenced both the theory and practice of world politics.
- Statism, survival, and self-help are three core elements of the realist tradition.
 - **States:**
 - principal actor and fundamental unit of analysis
 - central assumption of realism involving two claims:
 - the state is the preeminent actor in world politics
 - state sovereignty signifies the existence of an independent political community, one that has juridical authority over its territory.
 - States fundamentally value survival above all else; tend to pursue self-interest
 - All states within the system are unitary, rational actors
 - “Assumption of rationality” in order to predict political behaviour
 - States are goal orientated and their goals are consistent
 - Rationality is contextual and cultural
 - states must arrive at relations with other states on their own, rather than it being dictated to them by some higher controlling entity
 - Focus on national interests rather ideology
 - The state must, and does, pursue power
 - **Anarchy:**
 - no higher authority in world politics
 - international system exists in a state of constant antagonism
 - Anarchy promotes or provokes self-help meaning that states will try to maximize their security and relative power positions
 - **Self-help:**
 - Survival/self-preservation is the primary objective of all states
 - every state can only rely on itself to ensure its own well-being
 - States build up military to survive, which may lead to a security dilemma
 - **Power:**
 - international politics is a struggle for power (military, resources)
 - Obstacle to international cooperation
 - Whenever two states seek to cooperate with one another, both must always consider not just how much they will gain from the cooperation, but also how much each state will gain relative to the other
 - Groups strive to attain as many resources as possible (relative gain)
 - **Power** helps ensure **survival** in these conditions
 - Power will not be “granted” - each state must independently try to gain power
 - A **balance of power** will prevent a hegemonic state or a coalition of states from dominating the others - and so should actively be sought
 - **Security dilemma:**

- shows how *individually*, states might only be doing what they can to enhance *their own* security; nevertheless, *collectively*, their actions lead to arms races and alliances

Problems and limitations with realism

- Anarchical, self-help system makes cooperation difficult to achieve.
- In relative gains, it is not satisfied with simply increasing its power or wealth but also how much other gained.
- Power as an absolute concept is vague and hard to define
- Ignores the role of economics and culture

Cold War and conflicts: Three dynamics of conflict

1. Alliances in Europe
 - a. New bipolar world (survival and quest for power)
 - i. Balance of power between USSR and USA
 1. Alliance system (NATO and Warsaw Pact)
 2. USSR and Eastern Europe (ensure your survival)
 3. USA: survival (domino theory - Truman doctrine(aimed to contain the Soviet expansion) and Marshall plan(though notionally open to all European countries, aided economic recovery in Western Europe, and strengthened ties with the US))
 - b. Security dilemma between the 2 superpowers
2. Arms Race (deterrence and MAD)
 - a. Nuclear bombs
 - b. Intercontinental missiles
 - c. Anti-ballistic system
 - d. Arms race in Europe and Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)
3. Proxies war in the third world
 - a. Soviet support against colonial powers in the third world
 - i. Sino-Soviet split (1960s)
 - ii. Vietnam war
 - iii. Russian invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989)

Greed

Greed analyses argues that combatants in armed conflicts are motivated by a desire to better their situation, and perform a cost-benefit analysis in examining if the rewards of joining a rebellion are greater than not joining.

Economic motivations and explanations to conflicts (control over resources; poverty)

- Motive (individual level)
 - Cost of rebellion is low in developing countries
 - Labour market approach
 - Low education; limited social mobility (low opportunity)
 - Low income

- Economic motivations
 - Make money from violence (looting)
 - Easy access to resources
 - Capture the state (high risk/high reward)
- Opportunity (group level)
 - Weak state or collapsed state structure
 - (high risk/high reward)
 - Availability of finance
 - Lootable resources and rent-seeking
 - Foreign support (people are fighting as a job, with support by other government)
- Goal is to control and not to topple a regime
- No incentive to stop fighting
- Conflict resolution idea is to repair society and government, must acknowledge resources

The Economic Rational Actor Argument

- Individual approach to conflict
 - Expected utility of rebellion is greater than the expected utility of keeping their daytime job
- Information available for cost and benefit analysis:
 - 1. Current income level
 - 2. Potential reward for the insurgency
 - 3. Perceived probability of success
- Ex. Gas and oil; isis made \$\$ exporting, assad regime collapsing

Grievance

Grievance analysis argues that people rebel over issues of identity, e.g. ethnicity, religion, social class, etc., rather than over economics.

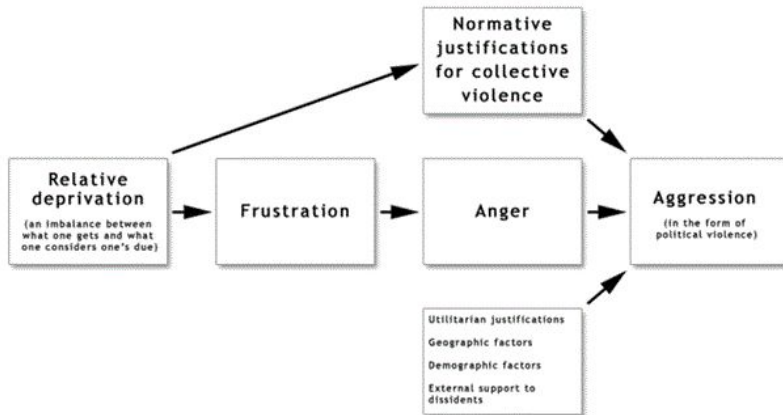
Socio-political motivations and explanations to conflicts (resentment against inequality)

Theory of relative deprivation

- Rebellions come to be when people cannot bear the misery of their life
 - Impulse desperation in the face of oppression
 - Potential link between poverty and violence
 - Feeling of injustice and denied dignity, security, and freedom
- Deprivation, poverty, and frustration are common, violence is not
 - Often necessary condition, but not sufficient
 - Socioeconomic background vs. socioeconomic prospects
 - Value expectations vs. value capabilities
- Conflict occurs when grievances are acute enough that people are willing to risk their life to change the political system
 - Ethnic and religious grievances

- Discrimination and inequalities, exclusion, hatred (manipulated by elites)
 - Political grievances
 - Poor governance, economic inequalities, political exclusion, political repression

The Deprived Actor Argument



explains when you assess value in society, you perceive yourself with potential social mobility, then probability of not engaging in rebellion or political violence in order to change an unfair system as mobilization; social condition is not acceptable anymore, incentive to increase frustration from regime that was untrusted and didn't give mobility that oppresses - regime perceived as an enemy, perception is not objective; difficult to perceive rationally if emotion is rational or irrational

Greed can be quantified with the following variables: share of primary commodity exports in GDP, proportion of young males in total population, and average years of schooling

Grievances can be quantified with the following variables: tendency to ethnic grievances or religious hatred by the extent to which a society is factionalized, economic inequality measured by land ownership, grievances over lack of political rights by levels of repression and autocracy, grievances on government economic incompetence

Criticisms and Limits

- Greed and grievances are highly interrelated
 - Poverty and perception of inequalities
- How to evaluate greed and grievances empirically?
 - For example, greed is based on:
 - Primary commodity exports in GDP
 - Proportion of young males
 - Average years of schooling

- Choices of proxies create methodological issues
- Focus strictly on the outbreak of a conflict
 - The risk of a conflict to outbreak
 - Does not address the duration or the intensity of a conflict
- Anarchy and new “barbarism” (Robert Kaplan)
- Rational behaviours

Economically rational, emotionally and politically rations

New wars is a form of warfare, characterized by:

- violence between varying combinations of state and non-state networks
- fighting in the name of identity politics as opposed to ideology
- attempts to achieve political, rather than physical, control of the population through fear and terror
- conflict financed not necessarily through the state, but through other predatory means that seek the continuation of violence
- Looting and plunder; international crime
- Violence towards civilian
- Identity-based conflict
- Guerilla; battle deaths down

Civil and intrastate wars

- Why ordinary people rebel against their government?
 - What are the root causes of political protest?
- How and why insurgent groups form?
 - What are the root causes of violent engagement?
- Why ordinary people support and join insurgent groups?

goal of war not controlling territory, become about wars of eradication; not fought by armies or tanks conventional warfare, instead fought by militia

Not to establish state structure

New wars made differently

Focus on state as the only actor isn't true anymore

States will do everything to state; in new wars state as collapsed

Rational choice approach to violent conflict by using greed theory of conflict which states: people will conduct civil war if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs of rebellion; war will be sustained as long as it is profitable. People are rational agents, and have *choice*, also in settings of war. Violence is thus seen as a product of individual rational action, not collective resentment. The individual decision-maker as the primary unit of analysis - methodological individualism

The individual is seen as an objective utility maximizer; weighing cost and benefits of actions, choosing option that has highest expected utility, termed rational choice

View of humans as “economic man”, being a rational human being, who acts out of self interest and the desire for wealth

All social action can in the end be explained as responses to signals from often imperfect markets

Rational action rooted in idea of human beings driven by instinct of self-preservation and will to dominate

War is likely to emerge if actors on both sides expect it to be profitable; will be initiated only when the actor believes it will yield positive expected utility

Actors are unitary objective utility maximizers whose actions are consistent and goal-directed