Realisms

Michael A. Jensen and Colin Elman

Contents

Abstract

In this chapter, students will learn about the various strands of the realist research tradition and their different approaches to security studies: classical realism, neorealism, rise and fall, neoclassical, offensive structural, and defensive structural realism. Although sharing a pessimistic outlook about the continuity of inter-group strife, each of these research programmes is rooted in different assumptions and provides different explanations for the causes and consequences of armed conflict. These differences are illustrated with reference to what the contemporary strands of realism anticipate will happen in international politics as China's power continues to grow.

Introduction

The realist tradition has exercised an enormous influence over the field of security studies (see Elman and Jensen 2014). Even its harshest critics would acknowledge that realist theories, with their focus on power, fear and anarchy, have provided centrally important explanations for armed conflict and war. This chapter discusses several different realist approaches to security studies. Although there are significant differences among variants of realism, they largely share the view that the character of relations among states has not altered. Where there is change, it tends to occur in repetitive patterns. State behaviour is driven by leaders' flawed human nature or by an anarchic international system. Selfish human appetites for power, or the need to accumulate the wherewithal to be secure in a self-help world, explain the seemingly endless succession of wars and conquest. Accordingly, most realists take a pessimistic and prudential view of international relations (Elman 2001).

In describing and appraising the realist tradition, it is customary to take a meta-theoretic approach that differentiates it from other approaches and that separates realist theories into distinct subgroups (see Elman and Elman 2003). Accordingly, accounts of twentieth-century realism typically distinguish political realist, liberal and other traditions, as well as describe different iterations of realist theory. As noted in Figure 1.1, this chapter distinguishes between six different variants of realism – classical realism, neorealism and four flavours of contemporary realism: rise and fall, neoclassical, offensive structural and defensive structural realism. While this ordering is not intended to suggest a strict temporal or intellectual succession, classical realism is usually held to be the first of the twentieth-century realist research programmes.
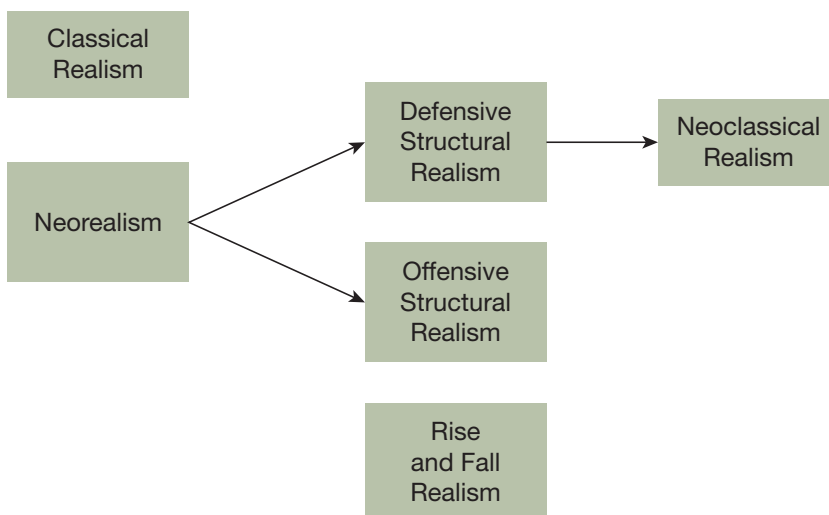

FIGURE 1.1 Six realist research programmes

Realists frequently argue that they draw on a long intellectual tradition and that realist themes can be found in important antiquarian works from Greece, Rome, India and China (e.g. Smith, M. 1986 and Garst 1989 for a contrasting view). They also suggest that humankind has, in most times and in most places, lived down to realism's very low expectations.

Classical realism

Classical realism is generally dated from 1939 and the publication of Edward Hallett Carr's *The Twenty Year's Crisis*. Classical realists are usually characterized as responding to then-dominant liberal approaches to international politics, although scholars disagree on how widespread liberalism was during the interwar years. Key works include those by Reinhold Niebuhr (1940), Martin Wight (1946), Hans Morgenthau (1948), George F. Kennan (1951) and Herbert Butterfield (1951, 1953). It was, however, Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* that became the undisputed standard bearer for political realism, going through six editions between 1948 and 1985.

According to classical realism, because the desire for more power is rooted in the flawed nature of humanity, states are continuously engaged in a struggle to increase their capabilities. The absence of the international equivalent of a state's government is a permissive condition that gives human appetites free rein. In short, classical realism explains armed conflict with reference to human failings. Wars are explained, for example, by particular aggressive statesmen, or by domestic political systems that give greedy parochial groups the opportunity to pursue self-serving expansionist foreign policies. For classical realists international politics can be characterized as evil: bad things happen because the people making foreign policy are sometimes bad (Spirtas 1996: 387–400).

Although not employing the formal mathematical modelling found in contemporary rational choice theory, classical realism nevertheless posits that state behaviour can be understood as having rational microfoundations. As Morgenthau notes:

> we put ourselves in the position of a statesman who must meet a certain problem of foreign policy under certain circumstances and we ask ourselves what the rational alternatives are from which a statesman may choose who must meet this problem under these circumstances (presuming always that he acts in a rational manner), and which of these rational alternatives this particular statesman is likely to choose. It is the testing of this rational hypothesis against the actual facts and their consequences that gives theoretical meaning to the facts of international politics.
>
> (2005: 5)

State strategies are understood as having been decided rationally, after taking costs and benefits of different possible courses of action into account. Classical realism's focus on the importance of individual leaders raises the intriguing question of whether US President Donald Trump is a realist (see Box 1.1).

Box 1.1 Is Donald Trump a realist?

On 27 April 2016, Donald J. Trump gave his first major foreign policy speech as a candidate for president of the United States. He declared that as president he would usher in an era of 'America First' foreign policies to improve the US global position by renegotiating unfavourable trade agreements, withdrawing from binding international institutions, compelling allies to shoulder more of the defence burden and taking steps to curb the growth of China. It is likely too soon to offer more than some tentative observations, but, with that caveat, how might some of the realist research programmes discussed in this chapter view Trump's foreign policy? In the context of different variants of realism (to be discussed), Trump's foreign policy appears at first glance to align most closely with the views of *offensive structural realism*. The United States has long been a regional hegemon, and its primary interest should be preventing the rise of a peer competitor, not trying to achieve an unattainable global hegemony. With that in mind, the US should first encourage states that are located near rising threats to deal with them. The US should only act as a balancer of last resort. Trump's pledge to pursue US security interests at all costs, including withdrawing from or revising long-standing alliances, could be interpreted as an attempt to refocus US foreign policy on this kind of offshore balancing to preserve US regional hegemony. However, to date, the administration's actions have not aligned with its declarations. By extending US involvement in Iraq and Syria and ramping up tensions with North Korea, the Trump administration appears to be violating the principle of sophisticated power maximization that drives offensive structural realism.

If Trump's 'America First' approach leads to a reduction in overseas deployments, *defensive structural realism* might view that as likely to reduce states' perceptions that the US is a threat. On the other hand, aspects of the administration's behaviour – including its step back from international institutions, its bellicose rhetoric and its economic nationalism – might have the opposite effect.

Neoclassical realism's focus on the domestic 'transmission belt' suggests that, despite the Trump administration's proclamations, some aspects of American social, economic and political experience are likely to block the more ambitious parts of 'America First'. High levels of polarization, fiscal woes, legislative paralysis and so on may prevent the United States from arriving at optimal foreign policies. If the US cannot decide its goals, extract resources to pursue them or select appropriate strategies, good results are unlikely to follow.

While it is too soon to forecast the fate of 'America First', it is prudent to remember *neorealism*'s warnings about misguided foreign policies. Neorealism suggests that systemic pressures will push states to behave in particular ways, but that they are free to ignore those cues and behave as they wish. The theory does not suggest that states will always behave wisely, only that they will pay a steep price if they do not.

Neorealism

In 1979, Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* replaced Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* as the standard bearer for realists. Waltz argued that systems are composed of a structure and their interacting units (1979: 77). Political structures are best conceptualized as having three elements: an ordering principle (anarchic or hierarchical), the character of the units (functionally alike or differentiated) and the distribution of capabilities (Waltz 1979: 88–99). Two elements of the structure of the international system are said to be constant: the lack of an overarching authority means that its ordering principle is anarchy, and the principle of self-help means that all of the units (states) remain functionally alike. Accordingly, the only structural variable is the distribution of capabilities, with the main distinction falling between multipolar and bipolar systems (see Chapter 10).

Contrary to classical realism, neorealism excludes the internal make-up of different states when thinking about their foreign policy preferences. Unlike classical realists, Waltz's (1979: 91) theory is not based on leaders' motivations and state characteristics as causal variables for international outcomes, except for the minimal assumption that states seek to survive.

In addition, whereas classical realism suggested that state strategies are selected rationally, Waltz is agnostic about which of several microfoundations explain state behaviour. State behaviour can be a product of competition among them, either because they calculate how to act to their best advantage or because those that do not exhibit such behaviour are selected out of the system. Alternatively, state behaviour can be a product of socialization: states can decide to follow norms because they calculate it is to their advantage, or because the norms become internalized.

Neorealism's minimal account of preferences and microfoundations means it makes only indeterminate behavioural predictions about foreign policy (Waltz 1996; Elman 1996). Waltz nevertheless suggests that systemic processes will consistently produce convergent international outcomes. Waltz notes that in international politics the same depressingly familiar things happen over and over. This repetitiveness endures despite considerable differences in internal domestic political arrangements, both through time (contrast, for example, seventeenth- and nineteenth-century England) and space (contrast, for example, the United States and Germany in the 1930s). Waltz's purpose is to explain why similarly structured international systems all seem to be characterized by similar outcomes, even though their units (i.e. states) have different domestic political arrangements and particular parochial histories. Waltz concludes that it must be something peculiar to, and pervasive in, international politics that accounts for these commonalities. He therefore excludes as 'reductionist' most assumptions about the units that make up the system – suggesting they must, at a minimum, seek their own survival.

By focusing only minor attention on unit-level variables, Waltz aims to separate out the persistent effects of the international system. A system can be said to exist:

'when (a) a set of units or elements is interconnected so that changes in some elements or their relations produce changes in other parts of the system; and

> (b) the entire system exhibits properties and behaviors that are different from those parts'
>
> (Jervis 1997: 7)

Because systems are generative, the international political system is characterized by complex nonlinear relationships and unintended consequences. Outcomes are influenced by something more than simply the aggregation of individual states' behaviour, with a tendency towards unintended and ironic outcomes. Neorealists therefore see international politics as tragic, rather than as being driven by the aggressive behaviour of revisionist states (Spirtas 1996: 387–400). The international political outcomes that Waltz predicts include that multipolar systems will be less stable than bipolar systems; that interdependence will be lower in bipolarity than multipolarity; and that, regardless of unit behaviour, hegemony by any single state is unlikely or even impossible.

Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* proved to be a remarkably influential volume, spinning-off new debates and giving new impetus to existing disagreements. For example, the book began a debate over whether relative gains concerns impede cooperation among states (e.g. Baldwin 1993), and added momentum to the extant question of whether bipolar or multipolar international systems are more war-prone (e.g. Hopf 1991; Mansfield 1993).

Partly because of its popularity, and partly because of its rejection of competing theories, Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* became a prominent target. As time went by, detractors chipped away at the book's dominance (e.g. Keohane 1986). Neorealism's decline in the 1990s was amplified by international events that seemed to provide strong support for alternative approaches. The Soviet Union's voluntary retrenchment and subsequent demise; the continuation of Western European integration in the absence of American–Soviet competition; the wave of democratization and economic liberalization throughout the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the developing world; and the improbability of war between the great powers all made realism seem outdated (Jervis 2002). Not surprisingly, after the 9/11 attacks on the United States, political realism enjoyed a resurgence. It is, however, ironic that this was at least partly owed to transnational terrorist networks motivated by religious extremism, actors and appetites that both lie well outside neorealism's traditional domain.

Excluding neorealism, there are at least four contemporary strands of political realism: rise and fall realism, neoclassical realism, defensive structural realism and offensive structural realism. All four take the view that international relations are characterized by an endless and inescapable succession of wars and conquest. The four variants can be differentiated by the fundamental constitutive and heuristic assumptions that they share. Briefly, these four realisms differ on the sources of state preferences – the mix of human desire for power and/or the need to accumulate the power necessary to be secure in a self-help world – while agreeing that rational calculation is the microfoundation that translates those preferences into behaviour.

Defensive structural realism

Defensive structural realism developed out of neorealism but is distinct from it. Defensive structural realism shares neorealism's minimal assumptions about state

motivations, suggesting that states seek security in an anarchic international system – the main threat to their well-being comes from other states (Glaser 2003; Walt 2002).

There are three main differences between neorealism and defensive structural realism. First, whereas neorealism allows for multiple microfoundations to explain state behaviour, defensive structural realism relies solely on rational choice. Second, defensive structural realism adds the offence–defence balance as a variable. This is a composite variable combining a variety of different factors that make conquest harder or easier (see Lynn-Jones 1995, 2001). Defensive structural realists argue that prevailing technologies or geographical circumstances often favour defence, seized resources do not cumulate easily with those already possessed by the metropole, dominoes do not fall, and power is difficult to project at a distance. Accordingly, in a world in which conquest is hard it may not take too much balancing to offset revisionist behaviour. Third, combining rationality and an offence–defence balance that favours defence, defensive structural realists predict that states should support the status quo. Expansion is rarely structurally mandated, and balancing is the appropriate response to threatening concentrations of power (e.g. Walt 1987, 1996). Rationalism and an offence–defence balance that favours defence means that states balance, and balances result.

Perhaps the best-known variant of defensive structural realism is Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat' theory (e.g. Walt 1987, 2000). According to Walt, 'in anarchy, states form alliances to protect themselves. Their conduct is determined by the threats they perceive and the power of others is merely one element in their calculations' (1987: x). Walt suggests that states estimate threats posed by other states by their relative power, proximity and intentions and the offence–defence balance (2000: 200–201). The resulting dyadic balancing explains the absence of hegemony in the system:

> Together, these four factors explain why potential hegemons like Napoleonic France, Wilhelmine Germany, and Nazi Germany eventually faced overwhelming coalitions: each of these states was a great power lying in close proximity to others, and each combined large offensive capabilities with extremely aggressive aims.
>
> (Walt 2000: 201)

Because balancing is pervasive, Walt concludes that revisionist and aggressive behaviour is self-defeating, and 'status quo states can take a relatively sanguine view of threats. . . . In a balancing world, policies that convey restraint and benevolence are best' (1987: 27).

One difficult problem for defensive structural realism is that the research programme is better suited to investigating structurally constrained responses to revisionism, rather than where that expansionist behaviour comes from. To explain how armed conflict arises in the first place, defensive structural realists must either appeal to domestic-level factors (which are outside of their theory) or argue that extreme security dilemma dynamics make states behave as if they were revisionists (see Herz 1950; Chapter 9). Steps taken by states seeking to preserve the status quo are ambiguous and are often indistinguishable from preparations to launch offensive

strikes. 'Threatened' states respond, leading to a spiralling of mutual aggression that all would have preferred to avoid. This is international relations as tragedy, not evil: bad things happen because states are placed in difficult situations.

Defensive structural realism has some difficulty in relying on security dilemma dynamics to explain war, however. First, it is not easy to see how, in the absence of pervasive domestic-level pathologies, revisionist behaviour can be innocently initiated in a world characterized by status quo states, defence-dominance and balancing (see Schweller 1996; Kydd 2005). Because increments in capabilities can be easily countered, defensive structural realism suggests that a state's attempt to make itself more secure by increasing its power is ultimately futile.

Second, defensive structural realists contend that states routinely signal their benign intentions to their peers, thus mitigating the uncertainty that drives the security dilemma (see Rosato 2014/15; Glaser et al. 2015/16). States can reveal their peaceful intentions to others by reducing their arsenals, by limiting the size of their armed forces or by investing in arms that are good for defence and deterrence but provide little offensive utility. Through these so-called 'costly signals', states can avoid the action–reaction spirals of the security dilemma that produce arms races and war.

Hence, defensive structural realists suggest that the world is made up of states that seek an 'appropriate' amount of power and signal to their peers that they intend no harm. If states do seek hegemony, it must be due to domestically generated preferences; seeking superior power is not a rational response to external systemic pressures.

Offensive structural realism

Offensive structural realists, in contrast, argue that states face an uncertain international environment in which any state might use its power to harm another (Mearsheimer 2001, 2014a). Under such circumstances, relative capabilities are of overriding importance, and security requires acquiring as much power compared to other states as possible (see also Labs 1997). The stopping power of water means that the most a state can hope for is to be a regional hegemon, and for there to be no other regional hegemons elsewhere in the world.

John Mearsheimer's (2014a: 30–31) theory of offensive structural realism makes five assumptions: the international system is anarchic; great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability, and accordingly can damage each other; states can never be certain about other states' intentions; survival is the primary goal of great powers; and great powers are rational actors. From these assumptions, Mearsheimer deduces that great powers fear each other, that they can rely only on themselves for their security and that the best strategy for states to ensure their survival is maximization of relative power (2014a: 32–6).

Mearsheimer argues that security requires the acquisition of as much power relative to other states as possible and that increasing capabilities can improve a state's security without triggering a countervailing response (2014a: 427, n. 27). Careful timing by revisionists, buckpassing by potential targets, and information asymmetries all allow the would-be hegemon to succeed. Power maximization is not necessarily self-defeating, and hence states can rationally aim for regional hegemony.

Although states will take any increment of power that they can get away with, Mearsheimer does not predict that states are 'mindless aggressors so bent on gaining power that they charge headlong into losing wars or pursue Pyrrhic victories' (2014a: 37). States are sophisticated relative power maximizers that try 'to figure out when to raise and when to fold' (2014a: 40). By expanding against weakness or indecision and pulling back when faced by strength and determination, a sophisticated power maximizer reaches regional hegemony by using a combination of brains and brawn.

Mearsheimer (2014a: 140–55) argues that ultimate safety comes only from being the most powerful state in the system. However, the 'stopping power of water' makes such global hegemony all but impossible, except through attaining an implausible nuclear superiority. The second best, and much more likely, objective is to achieve regional hegemony, the dominance of the area in which the great power is located. Finally, even in the absence of either type of hegemony, states try to maximize both their wealth and their military capabilities for fighting land battles. In order to gain resources, states resort to war, blackmail, baiting states into making war on each other while standing aside, and engaging competitors in long and costly conflicts. When acting to forestall other states' expansion, a great power can either try to inveigle a third party into coping with the threat (i.e. buck-pass) or balance against the threat themselves (2014a: 156–62). While buckpassing is often preferred as the lower cost strategy, balancing becomes more likely (all things being equal) the more proximate the menacing state and the greater its relative capabilities.

In addition to moving Mearsheimer's focus to the regional level, the introduction of the stopping power of water also leads to different predictions of state behaviour depending on where it is located. While the theory applies to great powers in general, Mearsheimer distinguishes between different kinds: continental and island great powers, and regional hegemons. A continental great power will seek regional hegemony but, when it is unable to achieve this dominance, such a state will still maximize its relative power to the extent possible. An insular state, 'the only great power on a large body of land that is surrounded on all sides by water' (2014a: 126), will balance against the rising states rather than try to be a regional hegemon itself. Accordingly, states such as the United Kingdom act as offshore balancers, intervening only when a continental power is near to achieving primacy (2014a: 126–8, 261–4). The third kind of great power in Mearsheimer's theory is a regional hegemon such as the United States. A regional hegemon is a status quo state that will seek to defend the current favourable distribution of capabilities (2014a: 42).

Mearsheimer's theory provides a structural explanation of great-power war, suggesting that 'the main causes . . . are located in the architecture of the international system. What matters most is the number of great powers and how much power each controls' (2014a: 337). Great-power wars are least likely in bipolarity, where the system only contains two great powers, because there are fewer potential conflict dyads; imbalances of power are much less likely; and miscalculations leading to failures of deterrence are less common. While multipolarity is, in general, more war-prone than bipolarity, some multipolar power configurations are more dangerous than others. Great-power wars are most likely when multipolar systems are unbalanced, that is, when there is a marked difference in capabilities between the

first and second states in the system, such that the most powerful possesses the means to bid for hegemony. Mearsheimer hypothesizes that the three possible system architectures range from unbalanced multipolarity's war-proneness to bipolarity's peacefulness, with balanced multipolarity falling somewhere in between (2014a: 337–46).

Rise and fall realism

Rise and fall realism emerged as a powerful alternative to the balance of power theories that dominated International Relations scholarship during the 1950s. A.F.K. Organski's classic 1958 volume, *World Politics*, challenged the popular belief that power parity is a virtue in international relations by insisting that throughout history 'world peace has coincided with periods of unchallenged supremacy of power, whereas the periods of approximate balance have been the periods of war' (Organski 1968a: 364). Organski's claim that hegemony is the foundation for peace, while balance is often associated with war, has since become a central theme of rise and fall realism.

In particular, this research programme emphasizes that war between major powers is least likely when the international system is dominated by a single state and when there is an absence of rising challengers vying for system leadership. Given its privileged position, the dominant state is capable of shaping the rules and practices of the international system in such a way as to satisfy its selfish interests. Stability is a product of this hegemonic order, as states that are dissatisfied with the status quo lack the capabilities to change it. However, as power becomes more evenly matched, war over system leadership is likely to occur. When two or more states approach power parity, the declining hegemon may rationally calculate the need for preventive war in order to preserve its status as the world's top power (Gilpin 1981). In the absence of a preventive attack, a dissatisfied rising challenger could initiate a war in an attempt to capture the top spot and all of the benefits that go along with it (Organski 1968a, 1968b).

Rise and fall realism depicts the course of human history, or some significant portion of it, as the successive rise and fall of great powers. In order to explain this historical trend, it pays particular attention to the mechanisms that cause states to grow at different rates and at different times. In contrast to neorealism, rise and fall realists contend that differential growth rates are mainly caused by processes internal to states, including the timing of industrialization (Organski 1958, 1968b), social formation and type of economic system (Gilpin 1981), bureaucratic politics and productivity (Doran 1983), and military, economic and technological innovation (Modelski 1978). Since these dynamics are not at work in all states at the same time or to the same extent, rather than grow simultaneously, states tend to rise and fall in relation to one another. Thus, internal developments and the timing of their onset produce the periods of transition from one system leader to the next, which are often marked by war.

The rise and fall research programme has spawned a number of theories to explain differential growth patterns and the onset of major power war, including debates over (1) whether it is the rising challenger or the declining hegemon that initiates

war; (2) what specific internal processes drive differential growth; and (3) whether the theory is applicable across time and space, or limited to a period of history or a particular region of the world (see Elman and Jensen 2014).

While continuing to emphasize the onset of major power war, rise and fall realists have extended their scope to other important aspects of international relations. For example, Douglas Lemke (1995, 1996) has applied power transition theory to dyads other than those involving states directly contesting for system leadership and Dale Copeland (2014) has shown how relative power shifts deter states from participating in trade agreements. Moreover, adding alliances to the calculation of differential growth (Kim 1991, 1992) and security concerns and polarity to theories of great power competition (Copeland 2001), rise and fall realists have enriched explanations of power trends and war.

Neoclassical realism

Neoclassical realism suggests that what states do depends in large part on influences located at the domestic level of analysis. Neoclassical realism employs a 'transmission belt' (Rose 1998) approach to foreign policy, which illustrates how systemic pressures are filtered through variables at the unit level to produce specific foreign policy decisions.

While neoclassical realists agree that the distribution of capabilities is a good starting point for the analysis of state behaviour, they contend that the international system rarely provides states with clear information on which to base foreign policy decisions. Systemic threats and opportunities are not easily identifiable and there are numerous policy options available to decision makers for meeting strategic goals. Given these challenges, variables at the unit level often intervene between systemic pressures and state behaviour to determine the precise nature and direction of a state's foreign economic and military policy.

Neoclassical realists have incorporated a large number of unit-level variables into their theories of foreign policy decision-making (see Ripsman et al. 2016). Critics contend that these variables are often chosen in an ad hoc manner to explain particular historical cases, which limits the theoretical coherence and explanatory power of the research programme (Walt 2002). In response, neoclassical realists contend that how a state reacts to systemic imperatives is largely shaped by the perceptions of its leaders, the culture of its military, bureaucracy and society, the nature of its domestic political institutions and the ability of its state apparatus to extract and mobilize domestic resources to achieve foreign policy goals (Ripsman et al. 2016).

Randall Schweller's (2006) theory of 'under-balancing' provides a good example of how neoclassical realists incorporate unit-level variables into theories of foreign policy. Schweller starts from the structural realist position that state behaviour is primarily driven by the relative distribution of material power in the international system. He notes, however, that exactly how states choose to react to threatening accumulations of power depends on the degree to which they embody structural realism's unitary actor assumption. When systemic pressures are transmitted through states that are unified at the elite and societal levels, decision makers find it easy to

recognize threats and carry out appropriate balancing strategies to counter them. When states are fragmented, however, leaders often find it difficult to come to an agreement on the nature of a threat and how best to deal with it. Furthermore, divided states often lack the extractive capacity to mobilize the resources from society that are necessary for restoring a balance of power. According to Schweller, both France and Britain were fragmented states prior to the Second World War, and this explains why they both under-reacted to the threat posed by a rising Germany.

Realisms and the rise of China

As the preceding discussion illustrates, realism is a diverse research tradition. The tradition's theoretical diversity is nowhere more apparent than in the different, and sometimes contending, predictions that realists make about how the growth of China is likely to shape international relations. While offensive structural realists and rise and fall realists generally share a pessimistic view of the consequences of China's rise for global security, defensive structural realists are more optimistic that the relations between China, its neighbours and the United States will remain peaceful. Neoclassical realists are open to a wide range of potential outcomes, ranging from mutual accommodation to war. This section briefly reviews how the four contemporary varieties of realism – offensive structural, defensive structural, rise and fall, and neoclassical – see the rise of Chinese power influencing the course of international relations in the future.

Offensive structural realism

If China's economy continues growing at a fast rate, offensive realism predicts a future of intense security competition and global insecurity (e.g. Fravel 2010; Kirshner 2012). Offensive realists argue that, given the required capabilities, states will pursue regional hegemony as the best means of staying safe in a dangerous world. Most stress that there is no reason to assume that China will behave any differently.

In particular, offensive realism predicts that if China's power continues to grow it is likely to assert greater control in Asia. China will invest more of its resources in military capabilities in order to become the predominant power in the region. While China may not use those capabilities to conquer its regional neighbours, it will use them to try to dictate how they behave. China will also look to force the United States from the region through a mixture of military might and its own version of the Monroe Doctrine (Mearsheimer 2006: 162, 2014a: 370–71).

China's neighbours and the United States are not likely to sit idly by and watch as China takes over. Fearing for their security, threatened countries will join the United States in a balancing coalition to counter China's rise (Mearsheimer 2006, 2014a: 383–92; 2014b). Intense security competition between China and the American-led coalition is likely to result, with the United States pursuing aggressive policies in an attempt to remain the world's only regional hegemon. While this rivalry will not guarantee armed conflict, it will make war significantly more likely.

Defensive structural realism

Defensive realists are far more optimistic about China's rise and the future of international security. As they see it, the international system is relatively benign. Aggressive behaviour and power maximization usually trigger self-defeating balancing coalitions, technology and geography make offensive action difficult, and states can signal their peaceful intentions. Rational states, therefore, have little reason to worry about each other based on considerations of power alone. Thus, while China's rise will not be welcomed by its neighbours or the United States, they need not fear it.

As China continues to rise, defensive realists expect it will devote more of its resources to military technology and capabilities. Although these developments could spark a security dilemma leading to arms racing and war, defensive realists stress that measures can be taken by China to signal to other states that these investments are meant for security purposes alone (see Glaser 2010; Liff and Ikenberry 2014). For example, China could limit its military investments to technologies that work well for defence but have little or no offensive use. When paired with the belief that conquest is difficult because of defensive advantage and the pervasiveness of balancing, defensive realists expect that any security competition that occurs as a result of China's growth in power will be countered by a healthy dose of assurance and rational restraint. This is not to say that defensive realists believe that war between China and an American-led coalition is impossible. Rather, they would suggest that if war were to occur it would not be because structure mandated it. Some domestic-level pathology, such as log-rolling interest groups (Snyder 1991) or gross misperception (Van Evera 1999), would likely be to blame.

Defensive structural realists have recently argued that the United States should accommodate China's rise in order to promote peaceful relations between the two states. For example, Charles Glaser (2015) suggests that the United States can make a number of policy concessions to China and maintain its current level of security, including abandoning its commitment to defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression. Such actions would elicit Chinese cooperation on a number of maritime and territorial disputes, which would help sustain peaceful relations in East Asia for the foreseeable future.

Rise and fall realism

Rise and fall realists are generally pessimistic about a rising China and the prospects for cooperation and peace in international politics (e.g. Fravel 2010). Increased security competition and major power war are most likely, they argue, when a rising challenger and declining hegemon approach power parity. Thus, as China rises relative to the United States, rise and fall realists expect to see relations between the two countries become increasingly antagonistic, reaching crisis levels as they near each other on measures of material power (Kugler and Lemke 2000). If this occurs, the United States is unlikely to peacefully cede to China its position atop the international system and the remarkable advantages that go along with it. Instead, American officials could deem that preventive actions, including war, are necessary

to forestall China's rise and preserve United States hegemony. Likewise, as China's power increases, Chinese leaders are likely to demand more influence in international politics and a greater share of international spoils. If these expectations are not met, China could try to dethrone the United States by launching a hegemonic war.

For rise and fall realists, whether China's rise ultimately results in contained security competition or a catastrophic war depends on a number of factors. First, China must not simply rise but rise in relation to the United States. China's growth, while remarkable, is driven primarily by domestic processes that could break down or end before it becomes powerful enough to challenge the United States for international dominance. Moreover, even with unprecedented growth, China has not made many gains in overcoming the massive technological and military advantages that are enjoyed by the United States (e.g. Brooks and Wohlforth 2015/16; Wang et al. 2016).

Second, rise and fall realists stress that, even if Chinese growth continues at current levels, much of how the two states behave towards each other in the future will come down to American and Chinese evaluations of the status quo and whether China can articulate a vision for a new international order that inspires collaboration (Schweller and Pu 2011). American officials are more likely to be open to taking preventive action to stop the rise of China if they believe that the decline of the United States is deep and inevitable (Copeland 2001). Similarly, Chinese leaders are more likely to evaluate the status quo unfavourably if they deem that the policies and actions of the United States significantly limit their ability to achieve benefits in line with the country's growing power (Kugler and Lemke 2000).

Finally, rise and fall realism suggests that a number of intervening factors could moderate security competition between China and the United States and provide for a peaceful transition. For example, Kugler and Lemke (2000) have argued that power transitions are likely to be peaceful when both sides possess nuclear weapons. Similarly, power transitions between liberal democracies produce more favourable evaluations of the status quo and are less prone to destabilizing security competition (Lemke and Reed 1996). Thus, Sino-American relations may remain peaceful if China's rise occurs alongside a parallel process of domestic political liberalization.

Neoclassical realism

Neoclassical realism does not make determinate predictions about China's rise and its implications for the future of Sino-American relations and international security. Put simply, for neoclassical realists nearly anything is possible. That said, neoclassical realists agree that the future of Sino-American relations are unlikely to be driven by objective power trends alone. How China, its neighbours and the United States act in the future will be determined in part by the domestic-level factors that shape how states interpret and respond to systemic constraints.

In particular, neoclassical realism expects that the perceptions of key decision makers and the ability of the state to mobilize resources for its foreign policy will play a decisive role in determining how China behaves and how others respond. Thomas Christensen's (1996) study of Sino-American relations during the early part of the Cold War showed that Chinese and American leaders frequently prolonged

short-term crises between the two countries, often risking war, in order to mobilize resources from their domestic societies for the purpose of long-term grand strategy. If this were repeated, neoclassical realism would expect future relations between China and the United States to be more hostile than they are today as a result of leaders in both countries trying to cope with weak state institutions and their inability to extract resources from their citizens.

Neoclassical realism also expects that perceptions of China's rise in the United States and Asia will play a large part in determining whether China's growth is met with suspicion and fear or with reassurance and collaboration. If American and Asian officials perceive China's growth to be threatening, they are considerably more likely to adopt aggressive containment strategies than they are if they view China to have benign intentions. Given that perceptions are based on a number of complex factors, including past behaviours, shared expectations and the cognitive biases of individual leaders, it is impossible to predict how China's growth will be viewed years from now by individuals who are tasked with making foreign policy decisions. Scholars are studying factors that might impinge on these calculations. For example, Johnston (2016/17) investigates whether Chinese nationalism, a major element in the narrative that China is newly assertive, is in fact on the rise, and concludes that it is not.

Conclusion

Realism is a multifaceted and durable tradition of inquiry in security studies, with an extraordinary facility for adaptation. To conclude, we note how the development of these six variants of the realist tradition has at least three significant ramifications.

First, while the research programmes have some common characteristics, none makes wholly overlapping arguments or predictions. Although it is possible to support some general remarks about the realist tradition (for example, the observations about realism's continuity and pessimism), one should otherwise be wary of statements that begin 'Realism says . . .' or 'Realism predicts . . .'. Different realist theories say and predict different things. They also have very different implications when considered as the basis for prescriptive policy. For example, the best offensive structural realism has to offer the world is an armed and watchful peace anchored in mutual deterrence, punctuated by wars triggered by structurally driven revisionism when a state calculates it can gain at another's expense. The best defensive structural realism has to offer is a community of status quo states that have successfully managed to signal their peaceful intentions and/or refrained from obtaining ambiguously offensive capabilities.

Second, realism's capacity for change opens the tradition to some criticisms. For example, realists have been scolded for making self-serving adjustments to their theories to avoid contradiction by empirical anomalies. John Vasquez (1997) argues that balance of power theory is degenerative when judged by Imre Lakatos's (1970) criteria. Vasquez suggests that balance of power theory is empirically inaccurate but that succeeding versions of the theory have become progressively looser to allow it to accommodate disconfirming evidence. A related critique was made by Legro and Moravcsik (1999), who argued that realists often subsume arguments that are more usually associated with competing liberal or constructivist approaches. The result,

they argue, is that realist theories have become less determinate, coherent and distinctive. These critiques have provoked vigorous responses from realist scholars (e.g. Feaver et al. 2000; Vasquez and Elman 2003).

Finally, despite its internal divisions and external critics, the realist tradition continues to be a central contributor to security studies. Now fully recovered from the excessive optimism of the immediate post-Cold War era, realisms are likely to provide a substantial share of our explanations and understandings of the causes of armed conflict and war.

Further reading

Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1981). A leading work in the 'rise and fall' realist tradition, which investigates the consequences of unequal growth rates for great-power politics.

John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W.W. Norton, 2014). The flagship statement of offensive structural realism suggests that states pursue sophisticated power maximization to achieve security. This edition revises the original text by substituting a new closing chapter that addresses the question 'Can China Rise Peacefully?'

Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7th edition (McGraw-Hill, 2005). The most important classical realist text, and one of the two most influential realist books written since the Second World War, this volume suggests that unchanging human nature is the root cause of conflict.

Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton University Press, 2006). A groundbreaking neoclassical realist volume that illustrates how unit-level factors influence foreign policy decisions.

Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Cornell University Press, 1987). An important contribution to the defensive structural realist research programme, which argues that threat (and not just aggregate capabilities) determines how states respond to one another.

Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Addison-Wesley, 1979). The seminal neorealist work, and the second of the two most important realist volumes, this book shifted the realist research tradition away from the individual and towards the international system.

Liberalisms

Cornelia Navari

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, students will learn about the debates concerning security within liberal thought. The first section outlines traditional/Kantian liberalism. The second section introduces liberal economic thought regarding peace and war and the ideas of 'douce commerce'. The third section describes the democratic peace thesis, and reviews the major discussions on the idea that liberal states do not fight wars with other liberal states. The last section outlines the major arguments in neo-liberal institutionalism. It concludes by highlighting the main differences between realist approaches to security and liberal approaches.

Introduction

> True internationalism and world peace will come through individual freedom,
> the free market, and the peaceful and voluntary associations of civil society.
> (Ebeling 2000)

The liberal tradition in thinking about security dates as far back as the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who emphasized the importance of 'republican' constitutions in producing peace. His pamphlet *Perpetual Peace* contains a peace plan and may fairly be called the first liberal tract on the subject. But liberal security has been elaborated by different schools within a developing tradition of liberal thought. Andrew Moravcsik (2001) has distinguished between ideational, commercial and republican liberalism following Michael Doyle (1998), who distinguished international, commercial and ideological liberalism, each with rather different implications for security planning; and Zacher and Matthews (1995) have identified four different tendencies in liberal security thought. Each reflects upon a family of loosely knit concepts, containing in some cases rather opposed approaches. Kant believed that trade was likely to engender conflict, while later, 'commercial' liberals saw in trade a beneficial and beneficent development. Republican liberals argue that peace is rooted in the liberalism of the liberal state – the internal approach – while neo-liberal institutionalists emphasize the role of international institutions, which could ameliorate conflict from without.

This chapter provides an overview of the major positions on security within liberal thought. The first section outlines traditional/Kantian liberalism. The second section introduces liberal economic thought regarding peace and war and the ideas of 'douce commerce'. The third section describes the democratic peace thesis and reviews the major discussions on the idea that liberal states do not fight wars with other liberal states. The last section outlines the major arguments in neo-liberal institutionalism. It concludes by highlighting the main differences between realist approaches to security and liberal approaches.

Traditional or Kantian liberalism

Immanuel Kant was an Enlightenment philosopher (some would say the greatest Enlightenment philosopher), often noted for his approach to ethics. (Kant argued that moral choices were guided by an inner sense of duty – when individuals behaved according to duty, they were being moral.) But he was not only an ethicist; he philosophized the 'good state' as well as its international relations. According to Kant, the only justifiable form of government was *republican government*, a condition of constitutional rule where even monarchs ruled according to the law. Moreover, the test of good laws was their 'universalizability' – the test of universal applicability. The only laws that deserved the name of 'law' were those one could wish everyone (including oneself) obeyed. Such laws became 'categorical imperatives'; they were directly binding, and monarchs as well as ordinary citizens were subject to them.

Kant argued that republican states were 'peace producers'; that is, they were more inclined to peaceful behaviour than other sorts of states. He attributed this to habits

of consultation; a citizenry that had to be consulted before going to war would be unlikely to endorse war easily. He also attributed it to the legal foundations of the republican state because he believed a state built on law was less likely to endorse lawless behaviour in international relations.

But being republican was not sufficient to ensure world peace. According to Kant – and it was the critical argument of *Perpetual Peace* – the situation of international relations, its lawless condition, unstable power balances and especially the ever-present possibility of war endangered the republican state and made it difficult for liberal political orders to maintain their republican or liberal condition. Hence, he argued, it was the duty of the republican state to strive towards law regulated international relations; they could not merely be liberal in themselves.

A critical part of Kant's argument, which initiated the debate between liberals and 'realists', was his critique of the concept of the 'balance of power': he refuted the argument, becoming prevalent in his day, that the balance of power was a peace-keeper. The idea of conscious balancing was fallacious, he argued, since 'It is the desire of every state, or of its ruler, to arrive at a condition of perpetual peace by conquering the whole world, if that were possible' (Kant 1991b [1793]), a view shared by some leading realists (e.g. Mearsheimer 2001). As to the automatic operations of such a balance, he held Rousseau's view that such tendencies did indeed exist. Rousseau (1917 [1754]) argued that states were naturally pushed into watching one another and adjusting their power accordingly, usually through alliances. However, this practice resulted merely in 'ceaseless agitation' and not in peace.

Kant's peace programme consisted of two parts (Kant 1991a [1795]). There were the 'preliminary articles' – the initial conditions that had to be established before even republican states could make much contribution to a more peaceful international environment. These included the abolition of standing armies, non-interference in the affairs of other states, the outlawing of espionage, incitement to treason and assassination as instruments of diplomacy, and an end to imperial ventures. These had to be abolished by a majority of states, non-liberal as well as liberal, to end the condition Hobbes had described as 'the war of all against all'. There were then the three definitive articles, which provided the actual foundations for peace:

1 The civil constitution of every state should be republican.
2 The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states.
3 The law of world citizenship shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality.

Spreading republican constitutions meant, in effect, generalizing the striving for peace, since, according to Kant, striving for peace was part of the natural orientation of the republican state. The 'federation of free states' would provide, in effect, a type of collective security system; and the provision of 'universal hospitality' would, in Michael Howard's formulation, 'gradually create a sense of cosmopolitan community' (2000: 31). Kant distinguished between the end of war and the establishment of positive peace, and his plan made peace 'more than a merely pious aspiration'. Accordingly, he can properly be regarded as the 'inventor of peace' (Howard 2000: 31).

During the nineteenth century, liberals tended to emphasize only Kant's views that liberalism inclined to peace. Through most of the nineteenth century, the liberal approach to peace consisted of critiques of the ancient regime, and promised that peace would automatically follow the overthrow of autocracy and the establishment of constitutional regimes. According to Raymond Aron (1978), nineteenth-century liberals had no peace plan. With the outbreak of the First World War, however, the emphasis changed. Then, the dangers that Kant had foreseen for liberalism in a dangerous international environment were rediscovered and liberal thinkers turned from internal reform towards emphasizing arbitration, the development of international law and an international court, to protect liberalism from without. When the League of Nations failed, moreover, some would go so far as to recommend either the abolition of, or severe restrictions upon, state sovereignty.

Douce commerce

According to Moravcsik, 'commercial liberalism' focuses on 'incentives created by opportunities for trans-border economic transactions' (2001: 14). This contemporary formulation attempts to make specific the causal mechanisms behind the inclination of economically liberal states to prefer peace to conflict. According to Moravcsik, 'trade is generally a less costly means of accumulating wealth than war, sanctions or other coercive means' (2001: 50). But it is not the only theory – other commercial liberals stress the structure of a liberal economy, not merely the preferences of individual economic actors.

The origins of modern commercial liberalism lie in the liberal critique of mercantilism, the aggressive economic policies recommended to, and to a degree practised by, the autocrats of the ancient regime. Mercantilist doctrine advised doing all to increase the amount of bullion held by a country, in an environment where bullion was believed to be a fixed quantum. The economic *philosophes* (called physiocrats) such as François Quesnay and Victor de Mirabeau identified a structural proclivity in mercantilism towards trade wars and territorial conquests. If your own nation was to be wealthy, it could only be so by making others poorer. Tariff walls were needed to protect the prosperity of domestic producers from the 'attacks' of foreign competitors. Subsidies were required for export producers so that they could 'seize' the wealth of others in foreign markets. Resources in foreign lands had to be militarily 'captured' to keep them out of the hands of commercial rivals. The effect of generalizing mercantilism was made explicit by Voltaire in 1764: 'It is clear that a country cannot gain unless another loses and it cannot prevail without making others miserable.'

The physiocrats argued that giving up mercantilism and allowing freedom to trade would civilize the citizens of a nation, facilitating a peaceful coexistence among fellow citizens and guaranteeing the rule of law. Commerce and international trade would exercise a restraining force on tyrannical and arbitrary leadership. Finally, international trade would incline nations to peace. Montesquieu first presented all three arguments in *De L'Esprit des Lois* (Montesquieu 1989 [1748]: 338).

The explicit association between non-mercantilist, open trading orders and peace was, however, not French but a British development. It first appeared in Adam

Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, where he argued that 'the hidden hand', besides increasing wealth, also promoted a lessening of economic hostilities. But even earlier, Smith's Scottish colleague and friend David Hume in his 1736 *Treatise of Human Nature* had proposed that a division of labour and trade benefited all participants, and David Ricardo (1817) formulated the theory of comparative advantage. According to Ricardo, wealth accrued in the degree to which states concentrated production in areas where they had 'comparative advantage' and traded for other products. Ricardo's theory underpinned the notion of a benevolent division of labour as well as the idea that trade was non-hostile competition.

The nineteenth-century 'commercial liberals' developed these ideas into doctrine. Liberal trade doctrine, or the theory of *douce commerce*, held that trade among states, like trade among individuals, was mutually beneficial. All men would gain through participation in a global division of labour – a way of life in which they offered to each other the various products in the production of which they specialized. Market competition was not conflict, they argued, but rather peaceful cooperation: each producer helped to improve the quality of life for all through the production and sale of superior and less expensive products than the ones offered by his market rivals. The market was civil society and peace; economic policy in the hands of governments was conflict and war (Silberner 1972).

Commercial liberalism also took on a sociological aspect. James Mill (1828: 5) described the British Empire as 'a vast system of outdoor relief for the upper classes'. Joseph Schumpeter in the twentieth century agreed that conquest and imperialism had economically favoured the old aristocratic elites, and argued that the social changes accompanying capitalism made modern states inherently peaceful, since they led to the decline of the aristocratic class.

The only formal non-liberal nineteenth-century riposte to the commercial liberals (that is, the only argument one could credit with some respect) was the mid-nineteenth-century idea of protecting infant industries. The German nationalist Jahn argued that because of the time lag between developed and developing countries, there was an argument for initial protection for 'infant' industry, but even then only until it could compete in an open market. In the twentieth century, under the pressure of the Great Depression, liberals would also argue that there was some justification for protecting economies from storms in the world economy, but again temporary measures only. (The liberal tendency came to be to improve international regimes so that storms could be avoided or ridden out without closures.) There also developed a more refined critique of the argument that everyone benefited through trade. This made it clear that the wealth accruing through opening economic exchange did not automatically benefit everyone in society; this depended on social policies that, among other things, deliberately fostered the skills that would allow individuals to participate in market economies.

During the twentieth century, the initial successes of Nazism, government-directed labour programmes and the much-vaunted 'Soviet model' led the commercial liberals to focus on government involvement in the economy and on protectionist ideologies. Indeed, twentieth-century commercial liberals spoke less of economy than of ideology, attacking ideas of economic closure and planning that derived from 'scientific socialism' and economic nationalism. The most famous of these is Friedrich

Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, but it had many echoes, especially in Central Europe. During the 1930s, the German economist Wilhelm Röpke declared that the 'genuinely liberal principle' required 'the widest possible separation of the two spheres of government and economy'. He recommended the largest possible 'depoliticization' of the economic sphere. In 1936, the Swiss economist and political scientist William Rappard (the Rappard Chateau that houses the World Trade Organization in Geneva is named after him) in a lecture entitled 'The Common Menace of Economic and Military Armaments' identified 'economic armaments' with all of the legislative and administrative devices governments use to politically influence imports and exports as well as the allocation of commodities. Rappard argued that a new world order of peace and prosperity would only come about when governments exited from control of the economy. In similar fashion, in 1950, the free-market economist Michael A. Heilperin presented 'An Economist's Views on International Organization'. He told his audience:

> It is an elementary, but often forgotten, knowledge that policies of national governments have always been the principal obstacle to economic relations between people living in various countries, and that whenever these relations were free from government restrictions, equilibrium and balanced growth would follow by virtue of the spontaneous and anonymous mechanism of the market.
>
> (Heilperin 1962: 181)

Attacks on ideology came to include the idea that peace could come through abolitions of sovereignty, a favourite liberal idea of the late 1930s and 1940s. But not one that was shared by all free-market liberals. According to the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises:

> [Classical] liberalism did not and does not build its hopes upon abolition of the sovereignty of the various national governments, a venture which would result in endless wars. It aims at a general recognition of the idea of economic freedom. If all peoples become liberal and conceive that economic freedom best serves their own interests, national sovereignty will no longer engender conflict and war. What is needed to make peace durable is neither international treaties and covenants nor international tribunals and organizations like the defunct League of Nations or its successor, the United Nations. If the principle of the market economy is universally accepted, such makeshifts are unnecessary; if it is not accepted, they are futile. Durable peace can only be the outgrowth of a change in ideologies.
>
> (1949: 686)

The notion that economic openness produces a more peaceful international posture has become the subject of close empirical examination. In 1997, Oneal and Russett (1997) declared that the 'the classical liberals were right' in their study of the record in the post-war period. Similarly, Mansfield and Pollins (2001) summarized a large body of empirical work that, for the most part, supports the thesis. There are various

exceptions and qualifications that are seen to limit the circumstances under which economic interdependence results in conflict reduction. Stephen van Evera (1994) has argued that the more diversified and complex the existing transnational commercial ties and productions structures the less cost-effective coercion is likely to be. By extension, the less diverse the production structure of a country and the more it is characterized by monopolies, the more fragile will be the inclination to peace.

Moving beyond economic interdependence to the issue of economic freedom within states, Erik Gartzke (2005) has found empirical evidence that economic freedom (as measured by the Fraser Institute Economic Freedom Index) is about 50 times more effective than democracy in reducing violent conflict. Gartzke's conclusions are critical for the direction of liberal reforms, since they imply that it is less important what sort of political regime a country has than its degree of economic freedom.

The policy prescriptions enjoined by the commercial liberals – often called 'economic disarmament' – focus on limiting the power of governments to impose trade restraints, primarily through international regulation. Foreign exchanges were to be open; tariffs were to be reduced to the minimum and quotas and other quantitative restrictions positively forbidden. Governments were to pledge themselves to open tariff borders, to abolish quotas and to allow currencies to move in line with market forces. These policy prescriptions were immensely influential in the architecture of the newly established international economic organizations, set up at the end of the Second World War.

Recently, the literature on globalization has suggested that globalization, in its aspect as unfettered free trade on a global scale, is a peace producer. Graham Allison has opined that 'global networks, particularly in economics, create demands by powerful players for predictability in interactions and thus for rules of the game that become, in effect, elements of international law' (Allison 2000: 83). Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* declares that

> When a country reaches the level of economic development, when it has a middleclass big enough to support a McDonald's network, it becomes a McDonald's country. And people in McDonald's countries don't like to fight wars anymore, they prefer to wait in line for burgers.
>
> (Friedman 2000: 14)

But it is not obvious that globalization has firmly entrenched economic liberalism. Commenting on America's foreign economic policy of the 1980s, Professor Richard Ebeling, of the Future of Freedom Foundation, observed the emergence of traditional mercantilist methods:

> If some of America's Asian trading partners 'capture' a large share of the American consumer market, the government responds with a tariff-wall 'defense.' If American agriculture cannot earn the profits it considers 'fair,' the U.S. government takes the 'offensive' by 'attacking' other lands through export price-subsidies. If other nations will not comply with the wishes of the Washington social engineers in some international dispute, the American

government influences and persuades them with government-to-government financial loans, grants and subsidized credits – all at American taxpayers' expense, of course.

(Ebeling 1991)

Box 2.1 Donald Trump's neo-mercantilism

Donald Trump, elected to the US presidency in 2016, demonstrated clear neo-mercantilism in his economic plan, announced during his campaign (Trump 2016), in which he promised to raise tariff walls and create domestic employment by limiting imports. He described trade as a zero-sum game in which countries lose by paying for imports.

The reputed peace effects of globalization are also countered in the literature by some reputed war effects. These include increased vulnerability to threats from the failure of the complex systems globalization relies upon, as well as from non-state actors whose access to weapons and potential for disruption increase in a globalized world. Advances in technology may also have made states more vulnerable to coercive threats than would have been possible earlier (on some of the implications of globalization for security, see Navari 2006). Liberal unease with globalization is well-represented in a recent collection of essays (Held 2007), where Michael Doyle, among other noted liberals, outlines the problem of democratic accountability in a globalized political system.

The democratic peace thesis

The 'democratic peace' thesis is the argument that liberal states do not fight wars against other liberal states. It was first enunciated in a keynote article by Michael Doyle in the journal *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Doyle 1983). Doyle argued that there was a difference in liberal practice towards other liberal societies and liberal practice towards non-liberal societies. Among liberal societies, liberalism had produced a cooperative foundation such that 'constitutionally liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another' (Doyle 1983: 214). Doyle based his findings on David Singer's Correlates of War Project (COW) at Michigan University and the COW's list of wars since 1816 (see Small and Singer 1982). Using the list, Doyle observed that almost no liberal states had fought wars against other liberal states, and that in the two instances in which it seemed that liberal states had fought against other arguably liberal states, liberalism had only recently been established. Doyle sourced the tendency in Kant's 'three preconditions'; namely republican constitutions, collective security arrangements and civic hospitality, in which Doyle included free trade.

The specific causes of the 'liberal peace' have become the subject of robust research and discussion. The two major contending theories focus on liberal institutions and liberal ideology, respectively. Liberal institutions include the broad

franchise of liberal states and the need to ensure broad popular support; the division of powers in democratic states, which produces checks and balances; and the electoral cycle, which makes liberal leadership cautious and prone to avoid risk (Russett 1996). But liberal institutions would tend to inhibit all wars, whereas liberal states have fought robust wars against non-liberal states. The other contender, which can explain the difference, is liberal ideology or 'culture'. According to the liberal culture argument, liberal states tend to trust other liberal states and to expect to resolve conflict through discussion and compromise. But, equally, they distrust non-liberal states. The major argument for liberal culture has been put forward by John M. Owen, who suggests that, 'Ideologically, liberals trust those states they consider fellow liberal democracies and see no reason to fight them. They view those states they consider illiberal with suspicion, and sometimes believe that the national interest requires war with them' (1996: 153).

Since Doyle first produced his findings, the theory has developed two variants: one maintains that democracies are more peaceful than non-democracies, that is, that they are more pacific *generally* (see Russett 1993). This is sometimes referred to as the *monadic* variant. The other maintains that liberal states are not necessarily more peaceful than non-liberal states but that they eschew the use of force in relation to other democracies; that is, the use of force depends on the recipient's form of government. In the later variant, sometimes called the *dyadic* variant, a few have argued that democracies may be even more robust in the use of force than non-democracies, owing partially to the ideological nature of democratic wars and partially to the fact that liberal democracies are generally strong states with a large wealth base (see Barkawi and Laffey 2001).

From the security point of view, the recommendations of democratic peace theory are clear – in the final analysis, security depends on encouraging liberal institutions and a security policy must have as its long-term goal the spread of liberalism. In the short term, it must protect liberalism, including liberal tendencies in non-liberal states. Doyle himself argues that where liberalism has been deficient 'is in preserving its [liberalism's] basic preconditions under changing international circumstances' (1983: 229). The route to peace is to encourage democratic systems, the universal respect for human rights and the development of civil society.

But such a conclusion depends on an untroubled and robust correlation between the democratic nature of a state and a peaceful inclination, at least towards other liberal states, and it is not entirely clear that such a direct correlation exists. Chris Brown (1992) has pointed out that liberal states have, during the period that many states became liberal, faced determined enmity from non-liberal states. The fact that liberal states have faced enemies of liberalism distorts the historical record; we do not know how they may have diverged in the absence of such an enmity. It may also be that in a world of diverse states in situations of conflict; that is, in an anarchical society, liberal states make more reliable allies – they do not fight one another because they ally with one another. (This is called the liberal alliance thesis and is compatible with realist approaches.) There is also the not insignificant fact that the majority of liberal states are locked into economic integration, via the European Union (a fact that may support the *douce commerce* variant). Finally, the democratic transition phenomenon may be a statistical aberration. David Spiro

(1996), for instance, has argued that historically there have not been many liberal states, and that most states do not fight wars against one another anyway. The fact that liberal states have not fought wars against one another may not be statistically significant.

As to whether liberal states are more intrinsically peaceful than other states, this is perhaps even more contentious. Kant, for his part, seemed to support the monadic theory; he claimed not only that republics would be at peace with each other but that republican government is more pacific than other forms of government. But the empirical work is indeterminate since it has so far concentrated on traditional state-to-state wars and has ignored interventions – intervention could also be considered an intrinsically hostile act involving the use of force outside of one's borders. Recent 'liberal' attempts to bring non-liberal states to liberal democracy (in Iraq, for example) have raised fears that, far from being a recipe for peace, liberal foreign policy may have its own tendencies towards war. This 'dark side of liberalism' has occupied much of the resent research, which has turned to the conditions which may lead liberal states to fight wars (see Geis et al. 2006).

Despite some hesitations from the academy, the theory that democracies do not fight wars against other democracies has been immensely influential in public policy. For example, it underpinned President Clinton's *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (US 1998); it was also extensively used to support the neo-conservative case for war in Iraq and has guided post-war reconstruction in insisting on a broadly inclusive post-war government in Iraq and an early move to self-government with elections. The democratic transition thesis has also come to dominate the peace-building programme of the UN. Michael Barnett (2006) has been critical of what he calls the 'civil society' model for post-war reconstruction, since it places emphasis on mobilizing social forces in often unstable and divided societies, when more attention should be placed on building state capacity and strengthening governmental powers (see also Paris 1997).

The association between war, democracy and rights, prevalent in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, has also been revived. Founded upon the principles of territorial integrity and state sovereignty, the UN has recently begun to shift towards an emphasis on the rights of human beings as being at least as important as the rights of states in the international realm. In a discussion on the relevance of the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan clearly indicated that 'the last right of states cannot and must not be the right to enslave, persecute or torture their own citizens'. In fact, rather than rally around sovereignty as its sole governing idea, the Security Council should 'unite behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights conducted against an entire people cannot be allowed to stand' (Annan 1999: 514).

Neo-liberal institutionalism

Neo-liberal institutionalism concentrates on the role of international institutions in mitigating conflict. Robert Keohane (1984) and Robert Axelrod (1984), who have played a central role in defining this field, point to the ability of institutions such as the UN to redefine state roles and act as arbitrators in state disputes. Although

institutions cannot absolve anarchy, they can change the character of the inter-national environment by influencing state preferences and state behaviour. International institutions do this by a variety of methods that either create strong incentives for cooperation such as favourable trade status, or powerful disincentives such as trade sanctions.

'Under what conditions will cooperation emerge in a world of egoists without central authority?' This question was posed by Robert Axelrod (1984) in his central contribution to the theory, where he identified several critical factors. The first was the practice of tit-for-tat. He argued that when agents returned good for good this initiated a potential spiral of cooperative behaviour. If this practice were repeated, egoistic agents would gradually learn to trust one another, particularly when their interests coincided. This situation was formally modelled as a reiterated prisoner's dilemma situation. It implied that if states repeatedly found themselves in a situa-tion in which they feared that their self-restraint would be taken advantage of, they would not defect but would, instead, devise reinsurance devices that would allow cooperation to ensue. Reinsurance devices produce institutions. He also theorized the 'shadow of the future', arguing that once cooperation was institutionalized states would hesitate to abandon it, for fear of what lay ahead. Axelrod went further by advising participants and reformers to increase the likelihood of mutual cooperation by enlarging the shadow of the future, by making interactions more durable and/or more frequent – for example, by breaking issues under negotiation into smaller pieces – and by changing the payoffs faced by the players.

Central to neo-liberal institutionalism is the notion of transaction costs. These include 'the costliness of information, the costs of measuring the valuable attributes of what is being exchanged and the costs of protecting rights and policing and enforcing agreements' (North 1990: 27). Thus, institutions are desirable, despite the constraints they impose on states, because they reduce transaction costs associated with rule-making, negotiating, implementing, enforcing, information gathering and conflict resolution. They are also durable. Existing regimes persist even after the conditions that facilitated their creation have disappeared 'because they are difficult to create or reconstruct' (Keohane 1984: 12–14, 50). This is the logic that lies at the core of neo-liberal institutionalism: cooperation in situations modelled by the iterated prisoner's dilemma can be achieved in highly institutionalized settings because institutions can serve as means of providing information, reducing trans-action costs and altering the payoffs associated with cooperation. In consequence, many neo-liberal institutionalists argue that international actors should promote institutionalization as a means of promoting the collective interest in international stability.

Constructivist institutionalism, on the other hand, conceptualizes institutions as a collection of norms, rules and routines, rather than a formal structure (see Chapter 3). In contrast to rational choice theories like Axelrod's, institutions do not simply change the preferences of actors but can also shape their identity (Barnett and Finnemore 1999). Constructivism focuses on the central role of ideology, rules and norms that institutions diffuse to constitute agents. Against a 'logic of instrumentality' or 'logic of consequences' of rational choice institutionalism, constructivism posits a 'logic of appropriateness', arguing that individuals' actions

are guided by social expectations rather than utility maximization calculations. Institutional routines are followed even when there is no obvious self-interest involved (see March and Olsen 1989; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

There is, however, no single model of the most desirable sort of institution. On the contrary, the notion of transaction costs points to very different sorts of institutions for different cooperation problems. For example, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) during the 1970s between the US and the Soviet Union required a set of specialists to determine what might be meant by a 'technical advance', but avoiding the dangers of misreading technical information required a telephone hotline between the major nuclear antagonists. Neo-liberal institutionalism has spawned a voluminous institutional design literature that points to the variation in international institutions and outlines the different institutional arrangements necessary to address different types of cooperation problems (see e.g. Koremos et al. 2004; Mitchell 2006).

In this approach, unlike other liberal approaches, states are central. They are the agents who design institutions to advance their joint interests. Interests are first defined outside the institutional context (in formal language, 'individual preferences are exogenous'; they are defined outside of institutional contexts), and then institutions are designed by state actors to facilitate the achievement of their joint interests (Keohane 1989; Jupille and Caporaso 1999). Thus, institutions emerge and survive because they serve to maximize the exogenously determined interests and preferences of their members, especially those founding members who designed the institution.

But state-centredness has also led to a central ambiguity in the approach: what if the state is no longer able to cope with the pressures of interdependence? This has led to a radical liberal school exemplified by David Held (1995) and Seyom Brown (1996). In this version, the state is no longer able to cope with international crises such as the degradation of the environment, mass migration, starvation and disease. In such a situation, Brown (1996) recommends that we substitute world interests for the state interests envisioned by more conservative neo-liberals. These world interests would include the survival of the human species, a reduction in world violence, the provision of conditions for healthy subsistence to all people, the preservation of cultural diversity and the preservation of the world's ecology. But the approach is rather vague on who should build these new 'world interest' organizations.

Neo-liberal institutionalism contrasts in several critical areas with realism. Both agree that powerful states influence the formation and shape of international institutions, but for different reasons. According to liberals, states create institutions to maximize shared interests; for realists, however, it is to realize and maintain domination. According to the leading American realist John Mearsheimer, 'The most powerful states in the system create and shape institutions so that they can maintain their share of world power, or even increase it' (1994/95: 13). Realism also focuses on the extent to which powerful states dominate institutions; they argue that latecomers or less powerful members will have less control over institutional decisions and outcomes, benefit less from their creation and will have less commitment to maintaining the institution (Gruber 2000). This is quite apart from the general

critique that realists make of institutional approaches. 'Realists maintain that institutions are basically a reflection of the distribution of power in the world. They are based on the self-interested calculations of the great powers, and they have no independent effect on state behavior' (Mearsheimer 1994/95: 7). Neo-liberal institutionalists argue, on the contrary, that the 'shadow of the future' – the possibility to attain gains in the future – provides a strong incentive for all states to cooperate and create institutions that benefit all parties.

An equally harsh realist critique of neo-liberal institutionalism is Grieco (1993), with his concept of relative gains. Grieco argues that relative gains – what a state in a competitive situation might gain from cooperation relative to what his opponent might gain, are more important than 'absolute gains' – the overall calculus of gains versus losses. This is so, he argues, because power is a relational concept; power can only be measured in relation to another's power, that is, by comparison with another power-seeker. It matters not if the other gains and I lose, but if the other gains more than I do. He maintains that the calculus of relative gains often sabotages hoped-for cooperative ventures if the cooperative venture threatens to change the balance of power (for discussion of the relevance of the absolute vs. relative gains argument to neo-liberal institutionalism, see also Snidal 1991; Powell 1991).

The question is, how suitable is neo-liberal insitutionalism with regard to security issues? Jervis has observed that the realm of security has special characteristics that at the same time make regime creation more difficult and increase its need: 'Security regimes, with their call for mutual restraint and limitations on unilateral actions, rarely seem attractive to decision-makers' under the security dilemma (Jervis 1982: 360). Basic to the neo-liberal institutionalists is the idea of common interests that states could achieve together. But what if antagonists do not share common interests? According to Jervis (1999: 54), 'states will establish an institution if and only if they seek the goals that the institution will help them reach'. It does not seem, superficially, that institutions could do much to increase security.

The notion that security might lie outside the scope of neo-liberal cooperation has led neo-liberal institutionalists to focus on cooperation in low politics such as economy, society and environment and pay much less attention to military security cooperation. But the persistence and expansion of NATO after the end of the Cold War created a theoretical puzzle for realists and an opportunity for neo-liberal institutionalism to move into high politics. Wallander and Keohane (1999), for instance, explicitly regard NATO as a security institution and try to theorize the conception of 'security institution'. First, owing to transaction costs and uncertainty it is easier to maintain than to create new institutions, which is a basic assumption argued by Keohane (1984) in *After Hegemony*. Second, the duration of an institution mainly relies on the function and extent of institutionalization and organization. Third, most importantly, the conditions and objects for a security institution's persistence are not as narrow as those of alliances. An alliance is for dealing with common threats, while an institution is for coping with risks, including regional uncertainty. David A. Lake distinguishes hierarchic institutions from anarchic ones. He argues that the former are effective in taking actions but can be evanescent, while the latter, lacking dominant authorities, are less effective but more adaptable to a changing environment and can last (Lake 2001: 136). In short, Lake, Keohane and

Wallender argue that NATO persisted because it was not a simple alliance; rather, it was becoming a security institution (see Chapter 18).

The distinction drawn by Wallander and Keohane (1999) between an alliance and a security institution has led to a significant new typology. Dittgen and Peters (2001) have contrasted two ideal-type security systems – the alliance-type system and the community of law-type system – which provide models for the construction of their respective security systems (see Table 2.1). One is rooted in a realist perspective; the second in a liberal perspective. The key difference is the response to the threat. In a liberal community of law, potential disturbances are not dealt with by mobilizing superior power but rather diffused through integration, by reinsurance and by conflict resolution. Threats are circumvented by common membership in a security institution.

TABLE 2.1 Realist and liberal security systems

Theoretical base		**Realist (Alliance)**	**Liberal (Community of Law)**
Structure of the international system		Material; Static; Anarchic; Self-help system	Social; Dynamic; Governance without government
Conceptions of security	*Basic principles* *Strategies*	Accumulation of power Military deterrence Control of allies	Integration Democratization Conflict resolution Rule of Law
Institutional features	*Functional scope* *Criterion for membership* *Internal power structure* *Decision-making*	Military realm only Strategic relevance Reflects distribution of power; most likely hegemonic Will of dominant powers prevails	Multiple issue areas Democratic system of rule Symmetrical; high degree of interdependence Democratically legitimized
Relation of system to its environment		Dissociated; perception of threat	Serves as an attractive opening for association

Conclusion

In liberal International Relations theory, the state is not an actor but an institution 'constantly subject to capture and recapture, even construction and reconstruction' by coalitions of social actors (Moravcsik 2001: 5). The theory has distinct variants that supply different motivations for action and that have different implications for security theory. In ideational liberalism, the underlying motive is social identity, and conflict will ensue if borders do not accord with social identity. Conflict will also ensue across social identities. In commercial liberalism, the underlying motivation is economic benefit, which does not necessarily lead to cooperation but which identifies under what sorts of circumstances the economy can be a peace producer.

In republican liberalism, the critical factor is state form and states can be integrated into long-term peace arrangements that at the same time encourage democratization and internal state reform. The contribution of liberalism to security theory is dense, specified and progressive.

Further reading

David Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (Columbia University Press, 1993). This collects the major articles in the debate between realists and liberals, which still constitutes, arguably, the major axis of theory in contemporary international relations.

Michael E. Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven Miller (eds), *Debating the Democratic Peace* (MIT Press, 1996). This contains all the classic writings on the democratic peace and the major criticisms.

Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Cambridge University Press, 1978). This presents what has become the classic account of real liberals in their encounters with war.

Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton University Press, 1984). This lays out the first systematic statement of neo-liberal institutionalism.

Andrew Moravcsik, *Liberal International Relations Theory* (Harvard University Press, 2001). This sets out what the various liberal theories explain, their limits, and how to operationalize them.