

# CDSn4001: Conflict Analysis

International systemic  
causes of war: critiques  
of balance of power

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# Agenda

- Realism and conflict
- Constructivism and conflict

# Basic tenets of realism

<b>Interest of states</b>	<b>Survival</b>
<b>How to achieve survival</b>	<b>Increase power</b>
<b>Human nature</b>	<b>Man is flawed and therefore prone to conflict</b>
<b>Anarchy</b>	<b>The environment in which sovereign nation-states act</b>

# Polarity in international politics

		Examples
<b>Unipolarity</b>	The hegemon keeps order, sets up the rules, mediates disputes, and opposes any autonomous action	Rome USA since 1991?
<b>Bipolarity</b>	Two competing great power hegemonies. Each presides over an alliance of weaker states.	Athens vs Sparta (5 <sup>th</sup> century BC) The Cold war
<b>Tripolarity</b>	With three great powers, no balance is possible. Each state seeks to avoid having the other two gang up on it.	?
<b>Multipolarity</b>	With a multiplicity of powers, multiple combinations can produce balance.	Almost all European history (19 <sup>th</sup> century Europe) World since 9/11?

# Is this a realist world?

- Do you agree with realists? Why (not)?
- How do we achieve peace in a realist world? In a neorealist world?

# International Anarchy – a myth?

- “Anarchy is what states make of it.”
- If states behave conflictually, then the nature of anarchy *appears* to be conflictual. If states behave cooperatively, then it *appears* the nature of international anarchy is cooperative.
- What states do depends on what states’ identities and interests are, and identities and interests change.
- Because states and actors think anarchy is a certain way, it exists to them in that way!

# Constructivism

- Among the most influential IR traditions of the late 1990s/early 2000s
- Elements of global politics (e.g., state interactions) are historically and socially constructed; they are not some inevitable consequences of human nature.
- Emphasis on the meanings of ideas, objects, and actors. These are determined by social interaction.
- States will try to survive, but we don't know how they will achieve survival – could be through cooperation or conflict.

# Beyond a realist world

- Constructivism doesn't disregard states as central actors in global politics but allows for other forces to shape the world, as well.
- Ideational factors: identities, values, norms, beliefs
- Shared norms govern actors' relationships
  - E.g., non-use of WMD, prohibition of slavery, of genocide, etc.
- It is fundamentally about the possibility of change *within* the international system (not *of* the system)



# Norms

- **Norms:** standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity.
- Constrain behavior because actors are worried about costs and because of a sense of self.
- ‘Civilized’ states are expected to avoid settling their differences through violence, not because war might not pay but because it violates how ‘civilized’ states are expected to act.