

CDSn4001: Conflict Analysis

International systemic
causes of war: critiques
of balance of power

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Agenda

- Critique of neorealism
- Constructivism and conflict



Basic tenets of realism

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

Polarity in international politics

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

Status quo vs revisionist states

- **Status-quo** states
 - Generally satisfied
 - Goal is self-preservation
 - Tend to balance
- **Revisionist** states
 - Generally dissatisfied
 - Motivated not by security but by opportunity – goal is self-extension
 - Tend to bandwagon

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)

Do
political
leaders
matter?

