

## PSCI 2500 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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How does the international system work?



### "Realism"

- The idealism of the League and the Pact were ridiculed by critics. The response: "realism."
  - There is no place for morality and ethics in international relations.



### \*\* Realism

- A view of the world that believes:
  - States will naturally seek to maximize their power.
  - Conflict is the normal state of affairs.
  - The world is anarchic.
    - **\*\* Anarchy:** the absence of a central overarching authority. (Not the same as chaos.)

### Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

- "The life of man is solitary, nasty, brutish and short."
- The only counterbalance to misery and anarchy is a strong state to impose order.
- We willingly trade liberty for order and security.
- Realists believe the world works the same way.



### Realism

- The 3 S's:
  - Statism.
  - Survival.
  - Self-help.



### Realism: Statism

- There is no sovereign world order (i.e., no world government).
  - In other words, the international system is anarchic.
- Only the state can ensure order and protect national interests.



World government does not exist except in science fiction.

### Realism: Survival

- Kissinger: "a nation's survival is its first and ultimate responsibility; it cannot be compromised or put to risk."
- The means justify the ends; immoral acts may have to be carried out for the greater good.



Henry Kissinger,  
National Security  
Advisor and  
Secretary of State  
from late 1960s to  
late 1970s.

### Realism: Self-Help

- Alliances may be helpful, but ultimately a state has to guarantee its own security.
- Self-interest is more important than collective goods.
  - Collective goods – examples: global security, environmental protection.

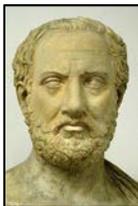
### Realism

- "The sad fact is that international politics has always been a ruthless and dangerous business..."
- "The overriding goal of each state is to maximize its share of world power, which means gaining power at the expense of other states."

– John Mearsheimer

### Realism

- "The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept."



– Thucydides (4th C BCE)

### The Realisms

- Classical realism: maximizing power is the natural order.
  - i.e., realism is the result of human nature.
- Structural realism: the anarchic nature of international political forces states to maximize power.
  - It doesn't matter what type of state – capitalist, communist, fascist, democratic, non-democratic – they will all act the same.

### Realists Conception of Power

- Power as a relative concept.
- It is a zero-sum game. When one actor gains power, another loses.

