

MJC 7, Semester 4

# Classical Realism in International Relations

## Introduction

Classical Realism is a foundational theory in International Relations that explains the behavior of states in the international system. This approach emphasizes the role of human nature, morality, and the pursuit of power in shaping international relations.

## Key Assumptions

1. Human Nature: Classical Realists believe that human beings are inherently self-interested, rational, and driven by a desire for power and security.

2. Anarchic International System: The international system is characterized by anarchy, meaning the absence of a central authority to enforce laws and maintain order.

3. State Interests: States pursue their national interests, which are often defined in terms of power, security, and survival.

## Key Proponents

1. Thomas Hobbes: Hobbes'

Leviathan (1651) is a seminal work that laid the foundations for Classical Realism. He argued that the state of nature is a war of "all against all" and that a strong central authority is necessary to maintain order.

2. Niccolò Machiavelli: Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) is a classic work of realist thought. He argued that rulers must be willing to do whatever it takes to maintain power and secure their states.

3. Hans Morgenthau: Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1948) is a influential work that systematized Classical Realist thought. He argued that international relations are characterized by a struggle for

power and that states must balance power to maintain stability.

## Critiques and Limitations

1. Overemphasis on State Interests: Classical Realism has been criticized for its narrow focus on state interests and its neglect of other actors and factors in international relations.

2. Failure to Account for Cooperation: Classical Realism has been criticized for its pessimistic view of international relations and its failure to account for instances of cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

# Conclusion

Classical Realism remains a influential theory in International Relations, offering insights into the nature of state behavior and the international system. While it has its limitations, Classical Realism continues to shape our understanding of international relations and inform policy debates.