

MJC 7, Semester 4

Neo-Realism in International Relations

Introduction

Neo-Realism is a structural theory of International Relations that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the limitations of Classical Realism. Neo-Realists argue that the international system is anarchic, and that states are primarily motivated by the desire to survive and maintain their security.

Key Assumptions

1. **Anarchic International System:** Neo-Realists assume that the international system is anarchic, meaning that there is no central authority to enforce laws and maintain order.

2. **State Security:** Neo-Realists argue that states are primarily motivated by the desire to survive and maintain their security in an anarchic international system.

3. **Self-Help:** Neo-Realists assume that states must rely on self-help to ensure their security, as they cannot rely on other states or international institutions to protect them.

Key Proponents

1. Kenneth Waltz: Waltz's *Man, the State, and War* (1959) and *Theory of International Politics* (1979) are seminal works that laid the foundations for Neo-Realist thought.
2. Robert Jervis: Jervis' *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (1976) is an influential work that explores the role of perception and misperception in international relations.

Key Concepts

1. Security Dilemma: The security dilemma refers to the situation in which one state's efforts to increase

its security lead to a decrease in the security of other states.

2. Balance of Power: Neo-Realists argue that the balance of power is a key factor in maintaining international stability and preventing war.

3. Polarity: Neo-Realists distinguish between different types of polarity, including unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity.

Critiques and Limitations

1. Overemphasis on State Security: Neo-Realism has been criticized for its narrow focus on state security and its neglect of other factors that influence international relations.

2. Failure to Account for Cooperation: Neo-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

Neo-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, Neo-Realism continues to shape our understanding of international relations and inform policy debates.

