

irtheory:realism

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• • theory

 a way of seeing the world
necessarily partial: highlights some things, leaves others out
never just empirical observations

••• realisttradition

Thucydides: history of power dynamics between polities Hobbes: "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" Realpolitik: great power struggles for dominance key concept: power politics

o • • basictenets

 world politics remains fundamentally the same over time

physical survival of the polity outweighs other concerns
anarchy makes international political life dangerous

• • fundamental continuity

the fundamentals remain the same, but the details change very often

each situation has to be analyzed separately
lessons can be learned from the past

•• physical survival

survival of the leader for many political realists survival of the political community for IR realists "physical" = "military"

••• realistlogic

If the political community does not survive physically as an autonomous community, nothing else matters because nothing else can be done. Hence, physical survival must take precedence over everything else.

• • economicsandculture

realism and economics: acquire resources; preserve autonomy
realism and culture: defend identity; promote positive image abroad

use economics and culture to promote power-political ends

•• • objectivedangers

anarchy between sovereign states produces a "self-help" environment

states that do not look after their own security are "selected out"
ignoring the lessons of anarchy is a perilous undertaking

• • balancing

states react to the power of other states

often strive to balance capabilities:

internally by strengthening
externally via alliances

• • alliances

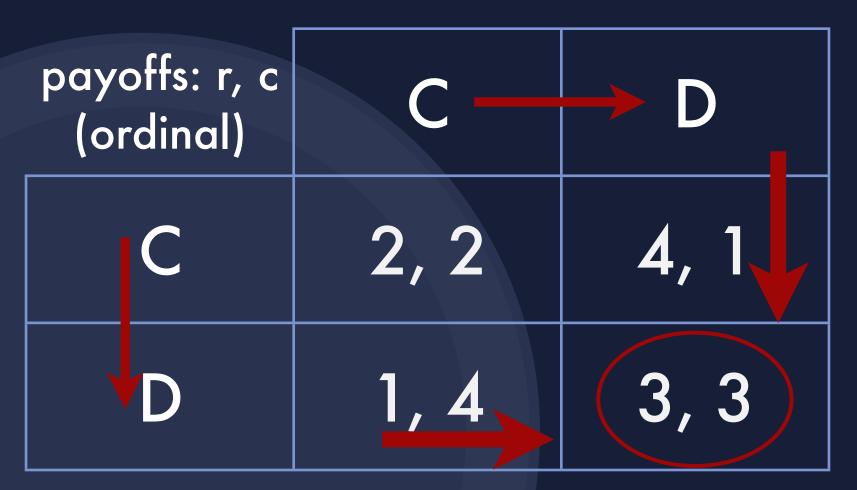
even allies shouldn't be trusted
Czechoslovakia 1938: no one comes to your aid unless they themselves benefit

treaties and such are not guarantees

•• prisoner'sdilemma

two prisoners are caught DA only has enough information to convict each on a minor charge offers the same deal to each: rat on your partner and you can go free hopes that each will turn in the other, so that she can convict both





 defeat opponent
cooperate with opponent 3) armed standoff4) defeat byopponent

• • pessimism?

realism's mood is certainly grim 🔘 anti-utopian O anti-idealist non-realists would call this pessimism …but realists, of course, call it realistic