

# Understanding Realism in Contemporary International Relations: A Comprehensive Examination

Realism is a dominant theoretical approach in the field of international relations that seeks to explain state behavior based on objective factors such as power, national interest, and security. It is based on the assumption that states are the primary actors in the international system and that they act rationally to maximize their power and security. Realism has a long history, dating back to the writings of Thucydides and Machiavelli, but it has been particularly influential in the post-World War II era.

There are a number of key concepts that are central to realism. These include:

- **Power:** Realists believe that power is the most important factor in international relations. Power can be defined in a variety of ways, but it typically refers to a state's military and economic strength. Realists believe that states seek to maximize their power in order to ensure their security and achieve their goals.
- **National interest:** Realists also believe that states act in their own national interest. The national interest is defined as the set of policies that a state believes will best promote its power and security. Realists believe that states are willing to use force or other means to protect their national interests.

- **Security:** Security is a central concern for realists. They believe that states are constantly threatened by other states and that they must take steps to protect their security. Realists believe that the best way to ensure security is to build up military strength and form alliances with other states.

Realism has evolved over time, but its core concepts have remained relatively constant. The origins of realism can be traced back to the writings of Thucydides, who wrote about the Peloponnesian War in the 5th century BC. Thucydides argued that war was inevitable because states were constantly competing for power.



## Understanding Realism in Contemporary International Relations: Beyond the Structural Realist Perspective

by Julio Ramos

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Realism was further developed by Machiavelli in the 16th century. Machiavelli argued that states should not be bound by moral considerations and that they should use any means necessary to achieve their goals.

Realism became the dominant approach to international relations in the 19th century, with the rise of nation-states and the development of modern

warfare. Realists such as Hans Morgenthau argued that states are rational actors that seek to maximize their power and security.

Realism has continued to be influential in the post-World War II era, although it has been challenged by other approaches such as liberalism and constructivism. Realists have argued that the post-Cold War world is a unipolar world in which the United States is the dominant power. They believe that the United States should use its power to maintain order and stability in the international system.

Realism can be used to explain a wide variety of issues in contemporary international relations. For example, realists can explain why states go to war, why they form alliances, and why they seek to acquire nuclear weapons.

Realism can also be used to explain the behavior of great powers. Realists argue that great powers are constantly competing for power and that they are willing to use force to achieve their goals.

Realism has been criticized for being too pessimistic and for ignoring the role of non-state actors. However, it remains a powerful and influential approach to understanding international relations.

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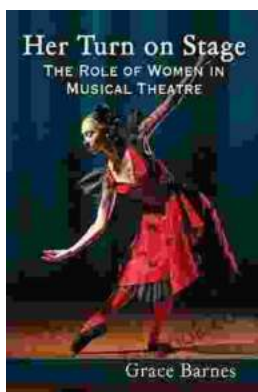
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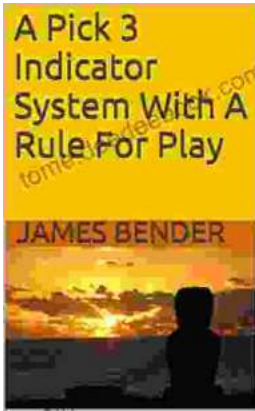
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