

# Understanding Neorealism Theory in Light of Kenneth Waltz's Thoughts

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The book *Theory of International Politics* without a doubt is a pillar in the field of international relations. Kenneth Waltz is considered as the founder of Neorealist theory or what is known "Structural Realism". His book was published at a time when Neo-liberalism was dominant. Indeed, he opened a huge debate in IR and challenged the consensus that prevailed at the time. The concepts of anarchy and power are at the center of Waltz's theory of international politics where he tried to explain how the structure of the international system is, and how this system affects the behavior of states, which they are considered as the main players in the international system. Thus, the current study's aim is to analyze and identify the main arguments and concepts of the book and the critics directed to it. To do so, in the first section, the intellectual background of the author and introduction to the book has been mentioned. Second, the arrangement of the chapters of the book is illustrated. Following are the main arguments and concepts of the book. Then critics directed to the book are presented, and finally, the conclusion is discussed.

*Keywords:* Kenneth Waltz, structure of system, anarchy, balance of power, reductionist theories

## **Introduction and Sociopolitical and Intellectual Background of the Author**

The book *Theory of International Politics* without a doubt is a pillar in the field of international relations and one of the main classical books of political science. It was written by Kenneth N. Waltz in 1979. He was an American scholar at the University of California, the University of Berkeley, and Columbia University. He was born in Michigan in 1924 and was among the most famous theorists of international relations, and he died in 2013. During his teens, he was interested in mathematics, physics, the performing arts, and rhetoric. He began his undergraduate studies at the Oberlin College in mathematics and then because of soldiering in the US army to participate in the World War II, his studying was interrupted, and later he started studying in economics. He continued his postgraduate studies at Columbia University, but again he turned to English literature and eventually changed to political philosophy. Kenneth Waltz was promoted to a master's level at the age of thirty. He taught as a professor in political science and international relations at Berkeley, Swarthmore, Brandeis, and Columbia universities. Waltz received his doctorate from Columbia University in 1957 (Hart, 2002, pp. 2-3).

Also, he was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. He wrote two other important books, *Man, the State, and War* in 1959 and *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics* in 1967. By publishing his third book in 1979, he was considered as the founder of Neorealist theory or what is known "Structural Realism". His book was published at a time when Neo-liberalism was dominant. Indeed, he opened a huge debate in IR and

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challenged the consensus that prevailed at the time. The theory of international politics must be considered a work in a longer path of studies, since he argued that the cause of war is not related to human nature because if human nature is the cause of the war, the cause of cease is also the human nature (first level of analysis). Nor it is related to the role of institutional systems of the states (second level of analysis), because if the institutional structure of a state is the cause of the war, why all types of institutional states have made wars in history? For these reasons, still, the question remains: what is the cause of war and cease? In his book, Waltz argues that war exists not because of the internal system of some states, but due to the anarchic structure of the international system. Unlike the hierarchy in a domestic system where it has the monopoly of force and guarantees order, anarchy persists in the international system. Consequently, to survive, states are seeking to increase or maintain their power. The concepts of anarchy and power are at the center of Waltz's theory of international politics where he tried to explain how the structure of the international system is, and how this system affects the behavior of states, which they are considered as the main players in the international system. The title of the book, *Theory of International Politics*, is the reflection of this perspective, knowing that, Waltz is not trying to explain the foreign policy of the state, as this is affected by many variables, but his attempt is to create a theory for international politics that can explain the behaviors of state at a systemic level (Maizlish, 2013, pp. 2-4).

For that reason, he wrote in the first line of the first chapter of his book.

I put this book for three purposes: first, is to test the theories and approaches of international politics in subjects that are theoretically important, second, is to establish a theory in international politics that addresses the shortcomings of other theories, third, is to test the validity and applicability of this new theory that has been established. (Waltz, 1979, p. 5)

### **The Arrangement of the Chapters in the Book**

In the first chapter of the book, Waltz tries to distinguish between laws and theories, and his basic argument is that: although laws might just describe a correlation with given probability theories explain them. In the second, third, and fourth chapters, he explains what reductionist theories are and criticizes them, in addition to explaining systemic theories. The theory of Waltz made crucial critics to reductionist theories, and it seeks to explain the behavior of states in a systemic theory. The main critic to them is that these theories ignore the impact of the international environment on the behaviors of states. Furthermore, differences at the state level cannot explain the existence patterns of international behavior. Dissimilar units that behave in similar ways can be parsimoniously explained by looking at the structural level variables. The structure socializes individual states to act likewise since it constrains the menu of actions that the states can adapt to react to international phenomena.

In Waltz's view, reductionist theories try to explain the events at both the sub- and supra-national levels by examining the behavior of units, without referring to the effect their atmosphere may have. However, simply by looking inside of states, it is impossible to understand world politics. For the reason, each newly observed phenomenon would necessitate the addition of new unit-level variables, which leads to the extremely subjective addition and a wild increase of variables. In addition, patterns of international politics recur through the significant change in the position of actors and the nature of actors in international politics. Because of different causes the same effects happen. If the same effects follow from different causes, then restrictions ought to be working on the independent variables in ways that impinge on outcomes. A system-level explanation of world politics by focusing on the structure solves both of these problems. However, it should be noted that structures are not direct causes they act through the socialization of the actors and through competition among them.

In chapter five, political structure has been explained; Waltz argues that to know the reactions of states and units, it must look at the system within which they interact. Moreover, domestic political structures in the perspective of Waltz have three important characteristics: what form of hierarchical structure is in place, the ordering principle of the system, the functions that each unit fulfills, it is a presidential, parliamentary systems etc., and each unit's capacity/ability to act.

Waltz by analogy enlarges these three principles to the international system. Anarchy is the ordering principle; inter-unit interactions will change only if this anarchical system changes. There are different units operating in a self-help system; it means anarchy. Therefore, their functions are similar. Therefore, anarchy and relative capacity (power) are the two relevant characteristics of the international system. Waltz by analogy claims that microeconomic thoughts must explain how states will act, how firms are in a domestic economy, states are like them in the international system. As each firm has a fundamental interest, survival is the fundamental aim of each state. While Waltz recognizes that other actors exist, he argues that states are the only important actors in this model, because other actors don't matter.

In chapter six, the concepts of anarchical orders and balance of power have been explained. Waltz says that the meaning of anarchical orders should not be interpreted as violence is common in the international system, but the threat of violence is ever-present. The meaning of anarchy is that the international system is one of self-help. He states that the condition of insecurity and the uncertainty about the future actions and intentions of each other limit cooperation between states.

In the balance of power theory, states are unitary actors in the international system, who seeks their own preservation at a minimum and universal domination at a maximum. The aim of the state is to achieve its goals either through internal balancing (increasing military and economic strength) or external balancing (creating alliances). Therefore, for this theory to operate there must be two or more states in a self-help system with no higher authority over them.

In chapters seven, eight, and nine (last chapter), Waltz discusses a number of poles, making alliances, and power. He basically says that those relations between states are unit-level characteristics not characteristic at the structure level. Thus, an alliance cannot be considered as a pole. But it has been the state itself. He argues that the world is bipolar because two opposing blocs have formed confuses relations with capabilities. Moreover, he says that weak states try to be more powerful in order to survive because it's obvious that inequality may leave some states tempted to extend their control.

In addition, he states that what affect alliances are the changes in the structure of the international system. In particular, he focuses on the difference between bipolar alliance and multi-polar systems. The multipolar system is defined as having more than two major powers. The main difference between bipolar and multi-polar balancing is that bi-polar balancing takes place internally, while multi-polar balancing takes place externally (among states). Because external balancing is unsure, bi-polar balancing is likely to produce less conflict.

In the final chapter, Waltz talks about power, where he says power is tantamount to control, but it can provide enough instruments to keep autonomy in the face of forces, more open hand or actions, and gives wider margin to maneuver in the game.

### **Laws and Theories**

Waltz argues that international politics students often use the term "theory" to refer to anything that is purely phrasal, and rarely refers to it just to meet the philosophy of science standard. The goals I seek are that

the definitions of the keywords of theory and law are carefully selected. While two almost definable definitions of theory can be presented, a simple definition of law is widely accepted. Rules govern relationships between variables. Variables are concepts that can take different values. The statement of law is as follows: If (a) then (b), where (a) the representative of one or more independent variables and (b) the representative of the dependent variable. If (a) and (b) have an invariant relation, then the law is absolute. If the relation has a high degree of stability without being completely immutable, although it is not constant, the law will be in this form: if (a) then (b) with probability  $x$ . A law is not based solely on the one that has been found once but on the basis of a connection that has been continually discovered. It repeats the expectation that if a person finds (a) in the future, then he will also find with a certain probability (b). In the natural sciences, even the laws of probability strongly recognize the necessity. In social science, saying that certain people with certain incomes are likely to vote for the Democrats is to make a statement similar to the law. A word resembles a senseless than necessity. However, a statement cannot be likened to law unless this relationship has been found to be very frequent and credible in the past, with the expectation that it will be credible in the future with high relative probability (Waltz, 1979, p. 1).

According to a definition, theories are collections or categories of rules related to a particular situation or phenomenon. For example, in addition to income, there may be a relationship between voter education and the political commitment of their parents on the one hand and the vote they give on the other hand. If the laws of probability are considered together, a greater correlation is found between the characteristics of the voters (independent variables) and the choice of the party (dependent variable). Therefore, theories are more complicated than the rules. But only in terms of quantity, there is no difference between the laws and the theories. This definition of theory is the call of many social scientists that can connect theory through the collection of carefully considered hypotheses (Cino, n.d., p. 2). Based on the above argument, we can come to the point that, this distinction between laws and theories is important, given that, a theory can explain and interpret phenomenon, while the law only can describe them.

### **The Waltz's Critiques of Reductionist Theories**

Waltz constructed the model of his theory on the basis of the systemic analysis, and, in order to strengthen this approach, he criticized the existing theory of international relations as a method of reductionist theories. Waltz says that he is referring to the reductionist approach, which is to understand the whole understanding of the features and the interrelationship of its components (Waltz, 1979, p. 18). Theories of international politics that are seeking to find factors and causes of war at the individual and national level are reductionist theories, and theories that are looking to determine the causes and factors of war on the level of the international system are systemic theories. Therefore, Waltz sees the essential characteristics of reductionist theories from their partial knowledge of the study (Waltz, 1979, p. 19).

Theories can be distinguished by their dependent variable, but levels of analysis are always characterized by phenomenon or independent variable. Where one determines the independent variable—whether at the international, national, bureaucratic, or decision-making level—the level of analysis is determined. According to Waltz, reductionist theories in international relations include imperialist economic theories (Hobson, Lenin, Joseph Schumpeter, and Johann Galtung), which emphasized the importance of economic elements and factors, ultimately, the reasons for the emergence of imperialism in the behavior of units; they do not use the system

level (Waltz, 1979, pp. 18-37). Reductionist theories cannot explain international politics by themselves. Reductionist theories are explaining international politics by observing the characteristics of a state such as national leader, its economy, and the political system of state and they argue that the effects of those variables produce international outcomes. Waltz in order to show the deficient of reductionist theories took the best of these (Hobson and Lenin) theories. He admits that those theories are powerful, and they can explain a lot of phenomenon such as imperialism, war, and peace, but they include few elements (variables), so they are not complex. Waltz says that in contrast to their theories, the export of capital in order to find enough consumers depends on the internal and external economic and political conditions of the state; it cannot be explained only by economic theory (Brown, 2009, pp. 267-268).

In addition, in contrast to their claims, some states did not export capitals, and some states did not produce surplus capital in the first place. And he gave an example; the British was the biggest investor abroad in the nineteenth century and its main state to invest in was the US. But the US was not a poor country nor was not unadvanced compared to the British economically through most of the period. This creates contradiction because their theory (Hobson and Lenin) argues that capitalist countries by investing abroad will get high profits in return from developing countries. But we saw the US mainly benefited from this investment. Furthermore, a number of imperialist states were not capitalist such as Japan. Therefore, his basic argument here is that, while capital assists state to be powerful it is not the only factor for this fact, alongside capital, domestic, and international factors help a state to be powerful enough to be imperialist (Waltz, 1979, pp. 18-20).

Waltz also accused the cadres of the systematic theories of international relations, namely (Richard Dowry, Stands Huffman, and Morton Kaplan as reductionist theories, despite their emphasis on the importance of systemic analysis. In the view of Waltz, Hoffman, and in particular of the day Richard, they seek to explain international politics at the level of states and politicians, and thus the systemic level is the basis of the actions of states and politicians, not the creator and the producer of their actions (Waltz, 1979, p. 50). While discussing Kaplan's system theory which is about six international systems and the existence of five essential variables for describing the creation of two systems, he argues that the relative importance of the interactions of the five variables is not determined. Since this important issue has not been mentioned, Kaplan's system approach cannot be considered a theory. Waltz agrees with Charles McLean's view of Kaplan's system theory, and he claims that Kaplan also led the theory of systems, to become popular and well-known, and also made it an overwhelming one. His work is more of an approach and a classification than a theory, this approach is full of puzzles that, because of its contradictions and conceptual defects, the readers are unable to solve them, and this is why his classification does not bear fruit (Waltz, 1979, p. 51). Reductionist theories explain international events through elements and components of elements that are national or sub-national, and he says that internal forces create (N) and external events are (X), it means, their pattern is N X. Thus, the reductionist theory is a theory about the behavior of the components (Waltz, 1979, p. 60).

Furthermore, Waltz accuses the pioneers of the theory of realism, namely Morgenthau and Kissinger, as reductionists. His objection to Morgenthau is that he searches for the roots of power in human nature (the level of individual analysis), not at the level of systemic analysis. In his view, both Morgenthau and Kissinger agree that maintaining international peace and security depends on the views and characteristics of the state and leaders; while Waltz believes it is impossible to understand international politics only through examining the

internal system of the states (Waltz, 1979, p. 62). In short, Waltz's critique of Morgenthau and traditional realists is that their theories are not beyond the level of the state to explain international politics.

### **Systemic Theories**

Waltz tries to set up his systemic theory after he labeled all other theories as "Reductionist". He basically explains what the limitations of structure theory are, and where we need to go to other theories such as reductionist or analytical approaches, for states level, leaders, and the compositions of the states, etc. He discusses the persistence of reductionism given that he believes that so far there is no systemic approach. Therefore, differentiation is required between them. Both reductionist and systemic theories deal with events at all levels, from sub-national to supranational. Reductionist ones start at the bottom the national (e.g., whether a state is a democracy) or sub-national level (e.g., how its' bureaucracy is ordered) and use characteristics and events here to explain international outcomes (Maniati, 2008, pp. 2-5).

#### **What Must a Systemic Theory Do?**

Explain, it means to say why the range of expected outcomes falls within certain limits: to say why events repeat themselves, to explain why patterns of behavior recur: including events that few or none of the units and actors wish them. Systemic theories explain and predict continuity within a system. A system theory shows why changes at the unit level produce fewer changes of results than one would protect in the absence of systemic constraints. Its perditions will be general, those kinds of systemic theories are able to predict and detect some of the situations and conditions that resulted in war more or less, but the prediction of individual wars is beyond their ability of them. A systemic theory thus mainly explains continuities. When will it predict changes? When is there a change of system/structure? Consider: the European powers were the great powers for a long time and during that time; unity between them was little more than a dream. Politics among them was essentially a zero-sum game. The emergence of the Russian and American superpowers created a situation that permitted wider-ranging of more successful coordination and cooperation in Europe especially the west of the continent. Thus, the determinants of war and peace lay outside Europe (Jackson & Sørensen, 2010, p. 160). Thus, system theories explain why different units behave similarly and produce outcomes that fall within expected ranges. However, theories at the unit level tell us why different unites behave differently despite their similar placement in a system.

### **The Meaning of Structure**

After criticizing the reductionist theories, Waltz emphasizes the importance of systemic theory and systematic structures. In his view, the systemic theory of international politics deals with forces that play a role internationally, not at the national level. In his theory, units do not play a major role in determining the structure of a system, and the change in the level of units does not lead to a change in the level of systemic structures. On the contrary, the international system and its structures influence the behavior of states and, with its' constraints on the behavior of states; it forms international relations between them and shapes the behavior of the states in the same way. Structures determine the behavior of the states and changes that occur at the level of the units. Such as the disappearance of a state and the emergence of other states, does not create a change in the international system in terms of structure (Waltz, 1979, pp. 79-81).

In Waltz's theory, the system is considered as a whole with related components. In addition, the best

element defining the system in his point of view is the structure of the system. There is a structure that affects the operation of the units within the system and shapes their behaviors. The existence of this structure makes the internal system more distinct from the international system. In his view, a political structure, domestic or international, has three main elements, which are structural characteristics (Waltz, 1979, p. 81).

1. Organizer principle.
2. Units and different components and the characteristics of their functionality.
3. Distribution of capabilities between and along the lines of units (Waltz, 1979, p. 82).

Thus, in order to explain the decisive and constraining characteristic of the structures of the international system and to show the distinction between them, Waltz by analogy applies these characteristics of the domestic structure to the international structure, and he argues that the international system also has a well-defined structure that has three important characteristics:

1. The organizer principle of the international system.
2. The characteristics of the units inside the international system
3. The distribution of capabilities of units in the international system (Waltz, 1979, p. 88).

The major difference between the internal system and the international system is that, unlike the domestic system of countries, which is hierarchical and has a central authority, the international system lacks a fashion hierarchy and centralized power. Given this fundamental difference, Waltz believes that the principle of the ordering of the international system is the lack of a central government, in other words, the existence of anarchy. Therefore, the scene of the international system is anarchic.

In the discussion of the second element of the definer of the structure of the international system, it means units; states should be considered, while states are different from each other, they are behaving quite similarly. This same behavior stems from the influence and intransigence of the systemic principle of anarchy. Put it in another way, in the absence of a global state to enforce regulations, a climate of insecurity is dominant; each state must be secured for itself. The rationale for security is shared by all states, regardless of the different characteristics of their internal structure. The best way to ensure security is also to increase national strength and power. Because of this, their behavior is gradually becoming the same. Waltz in explaining the similar behaviors of different states in terms of power argues that the organizer principle of structure, which means anarchy, created these similar behaviors. Waltz uses two concepts "socialization"<sup>1</sup>, and "competition"<sup>2</sup> to explain this same behavior, and he says that, structures of the system, (the organizer principle) from creating

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<sup>1</sup> Socialization: For Waltz, socialization has two special tasks. First, it makes the members of a system adapted to its norms; thus, socialization becomes a mechanism for the reproduction of the system. Secondly, socialization reduces diversity, because it creates behavior in which the member's differences are dimmed. Moreover, Waltz claims that states become socialized with the system by learning lessons from history, they emulate the most successful state's practices in the system, and those lessons are important deterrents to aggression and expansion. Sometimes those aggressions and expansion are beyond the wish of states. Waltz gave an example and said, two states get in a sort of dynamic, and that dynamic between them is more than just fear and tension, neither of them means to escalate the conflict, but the conflicts get escalated. Thus, actions and reactions build on each other and can lead to events that neither of them wanted in the first place.

<sup>2</sup> Competition: the structure of the system makes states to compete with each other without the wish of states to do so, Waltz provides an example; economic theories assume rationality, which is pretty true, for example, some firms maybe are rational and do not try to maximize profits. However, others might try to, but be inept. The firm that does best (sells the most, sets the right prices, controls coast, etc.) will do well, the other will go under. And the result will be the rational firm gets what it wants, the one that survived. However, the other will go under because it cannot sell its products and eventually bankrupted. Therefore, if this firm wants to survive as well, it must adopt the same policies. Thus, this pattern emerges without any firms' demand, it is a systemic effect, and it is outside of the control of firms. This is also true for states because the effects of the structure are outside of the control of the leaders of the state and state themselves.

socialization with regard to an anarchical system and competition over power and ensuring self-security gradually create similar behavior. Political ideologies do not affect this behavior. In other words, all states, whether socialist or liberal and capitalist, behaviors are the same, this amazing effect is the result of the structure system, it means anarchy (Burchill, 2001, pp. 75-79).

The third constituent element of the structure of the international system is the distribution of capabilities. The important point is that from the view of Waltz, the distribution of capabilities among states is not due to the behaviors of states. Although power and strength are characteristics of the level of second analysis, that is, the state and each state have a degree of power. But the distribution of capabilities is the result of the performance and the effect of the structure of the international system. Therefore, it is a system-level concept, not a local (Waltz, 1979, pp. 99-101).

Consequently, here a question will come up and Waltz tried to answer it, which is how the system can be changed? Waltz explicitly argues that structural change does not arise from the principal or second element, the behavior of units and states. In other words, he differentiates the change in unit-level from a change in the structural; it means a change in system level. Waltz regarding this case explains that:

1. The first determinant element of the structures is the ordering principle of the system. If an ordering principle is a successor to another ordering principle, moving from an anarchical system to a hierarchical one, is a systematic change, from one system to another.

2. The second element is the characteristics and performances of different units to each other. In anarchical systems, the behavior of the states is the same, so there is no criterion for systemic change in the second element, and since the system is in anarchy, the behaviors of states remain intact.

3. The third element is the distribution of capabilities along with the units. If changes are made in the distribution of capabilities, the system will change, whether it is anarchical or hierarchical. Therefore, the only part of the structure that changes is the third component, the capabilities of states. Capabilities are the character of the structure because the capabilities of a state determine its position in regard to relations to other states. Waltz illustrates how power is distributed in an international system or in the number of powers. Thus, unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar systems are created that in turn provide different security conditions and thus have a different effect on the behavior of states. As a result, the structure of the international system can be equated with the distribution of capabilities (Waltz, 1979, p. 101).

From Waltz's remarks, a fundamental outcome is achievable, which is that a change of system is very difficult. In explaining this argument, it should be noted that, in Waltz's perspective, the ordering principle of the system, in other words anarchy, is an almost permanent phenomenon, and this principle rarely faces change. The second element in his view also essentially has no role to play in the change of the system, given that, anarchy is dominant, and this leads the behavior of the state to be similar. Therefore, only the third element "distribution of capabilities" plays a crucial role in the change of the system. In other words, in the case of a major change in the distribution of capabilities, it would end up in system change.

### **The Concept of Anarchy**

The order is reproduced without the need for a moderator, as adaptation occurs without the need for an adaptor. From Waltz's view, this whole organic system acts as an autonomous system of self-help. The meaning of self-help is that the units of the system are together and act according to the existing structural necessities. If the units do not function in accordance with structural requirements, they will be destroyed. In



other words, as Waltz has stated, self-help is a system in which members who do not help themselves, or who are less likely to help themselves than others, do not meet their goals, and endanger themselves which can ultimately hurt them. Fearing such results would make states act in a way that would ultimately lead to a balance of power. However, anarchy does not mean absolute insecurity with a continuous disorder, but rather ordering without a moderator. Therefore, anarchy is the ordering principle of the system, or what is called the structure, which imposes restrictions on the behavior of states, which in turn causes states to act in a similar way. In other words, anarchy forces states to develop their power in order to survive, and as a result, assuring the internal security against external forces appears to be the most important policy of states (Waltz, 1979, pp. 101-105).

The anarchy in the international system has important implications for states and international politics. In general, anarchy requires three patterns of behavior for states in international politics. First, states are distrustful and suspicious of each other. They are always worried about the danger of being in war. The basis of this fear is the fact that in a world where states are able to attack another country, they have the right to remain distrustful of others to maintain their survival. In addition, in a system where there is no legal authority that a threatened state can help with, there are more incentives for states to suspect (Havercroft & Prichard, 2017, pp. 100-101).

Moreover, in the international arena, there is no mechanism for the arbitrary punishment of the third party, except for the self-interest of the third party. Fearing that they are being suppressed, push states to be more distressing and distrusting. Second, the state's most important goal in the international system is to ensure survival. Since other states are potential threats and there is no supreme authority to save aggression, countries cannot rely on others to secure their own. In other words, since the international system is self-help, each state alone must secure its own, and alliances and protocols are temporary and varied. Third, states in the international system are trying to maximize their relative strength. The reason for this is simple. The greater the relative strength and military advantage of one state over others, the higher the security rate will be. It is a good idea for any state to be the supreme military power in the international system because it is the best way to survive in the system, which can be very dangerous. This logic creates powerful incentives for states to exploit each other (Lechner, 2017, pp. 8-9).

Based on this, we can say that it is the anarchy that causes the international system to become an autonomous system of self-help. In an anarchic order, there is no kind of mechanism for protecting itself against external threats. The survival of any state as an independent political and territorial power is ultimately the responsibility of the state itself, which is the very principle of self-help.

### **The Balance of Power Theory**

The significance of the balance of power for Waltz is so important that he argues, if there is to be a distinct theory for international politics, this theory is the balance of power theory. Waltz proposes his balance of power concept as a central element in the synthesis of his structural realism. Two issues are important about the theory of balance of power. First, although the theory of the balance of power provides some predictions, however, these predictions are uncertain given that only a poorly defined and unstable condition is predicted from balance. Thus, it is difficult to say that any unbalance of power would invalidate this theory. Secondly, however, it is possible that states are prone to take new actions regarding the international incentives and constraints in line with the expectations of this theory. However, the policies and actions of states are shaped by their internal conditions. Failure of the balance of power that took place and the failure of some states to adopt policies

compared to the successes of other states can be explained easily and separately by emphasizing the effects of forces outside of the subject matter of this theory (Waltz, 1979, pp. 102-104).

Balance of power forces the international community to model the behaviors of the most successful actors, which leads to the creation of identical units and symbiosis among actors, and on the other hand, the rapid increase in the power of an actor provokes other actors to increase their power and, if not enough, it creates an alliance between them to prevent the emergence of a potential hegemony, and when the balance of power is established, the hegemonic calling goes away. Therefore, the balance of power operates in the anarchical nature of international system (Nexon, 2009, pp. 331-332).

Furthermore, the balance of power theory assumes that countries tend to adopt balancing behaviors so that the sequencing strategies, and the phenomenon of balancing states against others, are in fact the unique aspect of the international anarchical system. He argues that second-degree actors tend to be weaker if they are free to choose. Waltz goes on to argue that the balance of power theory will rule when there are two prerequisites: one is that the order of the system is anarchic, and the other is that the system is full of units seeking to survive (Waltz, 1979, pp. 126-127).

When a country faces multiple choices for unification, calculating the level of risk and the level of threat is the most important factor in decision-making, not power. For example, if a country sees another country as a direct threat to its survival, it will try to balance the power, without taking into account the superiority of the power and influence of the target state (Waltz, 1979, p. 127). On the other hand, if a country does not regard the other country as a threat to its survival in any direction, the strategy of balancing the power will not typically move, even if the negotiating country has a tangible superiority and strength. Waltz, after thoroughly examining the alliance between South-East Asia and Uruguay in the 1930s, came to the results: First, countries turn to threats and not just power to a balance of power strategy. Secondly, in the international political scene, the adoption of a balance-of-power strategy has been far less consistent with the number of strategies. Although the strategy of follow-up is pursued only from weak countries under special and temporary conditions, it is not a general strategy of continuity (Walt, 1985, pp. 3-5).

The point to be noted is that there is a relationship between the system theory of structure, which means the international anarchical system and the balance of power. This suggests that the principle of the authority of the force prevents disturbing the distribution of capabilities in a profound way along with the units. Put it in other words, the balance of power is the main factor behind the stability of the international anarchical system. If there were no munitions, then the international anarchical system would become hierarchical.

### **The Concepts of Bipolarity and Multi-Polarity**

The polarity of the system is defined by the distribution of power among the states within them, and the most common basis for calculating the polarity, the number and size of large powers in a system, and different polarities affect the strategic behavior of each state. In addition, stability in an international political system remains anarchic, and the number of great powers does not change this fact, whether it's bipolar or multipolar because there is a close link between the survival of the system and the survival of its great powers. However, it is not complete; power can rise and fall even as the system remains multipolar. And the change of a number of great powers does not change the system since more than two still are multipolar. If there are more than two great powers, it is unstable because two can always join together against the third one to remove it from great power status or divided the state between themselves. Waltz goes on and explains conventional wisdom is that

in a system with more than two great powers, a balance-of-power system is unstable; at least four were needed and fifth even better to act as a balancer. However, he notes it is quite difficult to act as a balancer because there should be negative interests, in other words, be afraid of what can be most concerned about what could be achieved. Moreover, the balancer needs to be powerful enough to be decisive when throwing a lot in with the weaker side. Thus, no other state can be too powerful. In addition, balancer needs flexibility. Therefore, a willingness to ditch states one feels ideologically close to or with which one has important ties, is quite difficult. In addition, flexibility requires a larger number, which entails multiplying complexity and uncertainty, and does not make one think that's safer (Wohlforth, 1999, pp. 5-8).

In addition, multiple players joining two camps do not make a multipolar system bipolar anymore. In a multipolar system, there are many actors, which makes it quite difficult in the guess of anyone to predict what is happening, very limited possibilities to make what is taking place is important. Put it simply, alliances must remain fluid, so trust is difficult because the possibility to leave the alliance and join the opposing side is high. At the same time, there are very limited options for alliances, because joining a state to the alliance is difficult, so each player is forced to worry about its alliance member, because if one layer leaves the alliance, the other could be in big trouble, due to high interdependence (Stephen & William, 2015, pp. 11-14).

Furthermore, in a bipolar system, the superpower has more room to act freely because its alliances must worry about losing the protection of the superpower not in the other way around. In a bipolar system, the source of the threat is clear, which is the other superpower. Moreover, responsibilities and interests are easier to discern. Superpowers must get a response because no one else will do and overreaction by either or both powers is dangerous. In addition, in a bipolar system, competitors get used to each other over time and begin to resemble each other. It has a high level of inherent tension because of the level of damage each can do to the other, but because there can be no appeals to third parties, giving that no one else can make a difference. Therefore, there is heavy pressure on moderate members, because they have to resolve things themselves (Waltz, 1979, pp. 170-183).

So we can compare the bipolar and multipolar systems based on the view of Waltz, in the multipolar system, the threat is uncertain because one of the alliance partners can turn to the alliance and become a threat while in the bipolar system it is completely clear the opposing pole, that is where the threat is coming from, the others are militarily insignificant. In the multipolar system, dangers are defusing, the responsibilities are unclear, and interests are obscure while in the bipolar system, the dangers are clear because the opposing side is known, responsibilities are clear since only the two superpowers can and are willing to take action, and interests are easier to discern, in another word, it is easy to figure out what is at stake. In the multipolar system, others can respond to advances by other alliances, while in the bipolar system, superpowers must respond because no one else will do. In the multipolar system, a miscalculation by some or all powers is the source of danger while in the bipolar system, miscalculation is not a source of danger because the risk of miscalculation is reduced, but overreaction by one or both of them is dangerous.

### **Critics of the Book**

After the publication of the book *Theory of International Politics* in 1979 by Kenneth Waltz and the presentation of structural realism as a theory for explaining international politics, we have seen numerous articles and works criticizing this theory, which is still continuing in the credible articles and books in the field of international relations. In this study, I have chosen the four most important critics.

Reflection on the key theses and Kenneth Waltz's methodology suggests some fundamental advances in the area of understanding the theoretical foundations of national security and the method of studying international politics. Waltz has tried to create a degree of compatibility between his realist interests and numerous global events. On the one hand, he was the successor of very strong thoughts; on the other hand, he faced a series of events in which realistic predictions of their explanation remained unfulfilled too. Therefore, Waltz's theory was born with his own rules and concepts, aiming at explaining the emerging global evolution. After a quarter of a century from the date of the emergence and continuation of his book, these can be cited as the main shortcomings in the Waltz method (Ken, 1998).

First: Herbut & Milcarz criticized the methodology of Waltz's work and claimed that Waltz's methodology failed to predict the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar system. Quite contrary to Waltz's perception that under conditions of the balance of power, with dominant power hegemony, international cooperation and lasting stability could be seen. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War came to an end, while the distribution of power in the world, during the 1980s, was quite the theoretical expression of neoliberalism (Herbut & Milcarz, 2017, pp. 199-200).

Second: Kratochwil in his work argues that Waltz while stressing the possibility of cooperation and conflict in the international system, he does not explain the conditions of these two situations. What matters is the level and dimensions of cooperation or hostility. Given the cooperation and hostility in the international system, it does not solve the problem. It is necessary for Waltz to think in what conditions, what level of cooperation, and in what dimension it is possible or absent (Kratochwil, 1993, p. 63).

Three: Waltz's analysis, like realistic analysis, is state-dominated. In this attitude, the state is also the most threatened and threatening one. Waltz seems to ignore all technical, intellectual, economic, and cultural developments that have reduced the role of governments, or he considers a little impact for these developments. At the same time as Waltz, despite the emphasis on government agency and the centrality of state power, it has not been mentioned what the most important indicators of state authority are, at a time when the monopoly of violence has been removed from the government, and political legitimacy has become the most fundamental component of national security (Kratochwil, 1993, pp. 64-65).

Fourth: Sangiovanni in his work argues that although Waltz's balance of power theory has strong points for simplicity and clarity, he is unable to explain the behavior of the actors. This theory explains some of the historical behaviors of European countries against hegemonic ambitions (for example, French behavior during Napoleonic empires, the behavior of the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany), it explains why and how these ambitions finally failed and lost, but this explanation is shallow and superficial. This theory, although partly explains the return of the balance of power to the continent of Europe, deeper analyses show that any struggle against hegemonic power was due to behaviors of actors whose nature was unbalanced. For example, some countries have tried to be impartial, or they are distant from conflict, and others stood along with the new emerging hegemony (Sangiovanni, 2009, pp. 347-349).

### **Conclusion**

Doubtlessly the work of Waltz is a milestone in the literature of international relations "international politics" and political sciences. The reality of events strongly corresponds with his findings, and via his proposed lenses to look through, the structural realist or generally known neorealist, can, without doubt, provide a helpful instrument to read and comprehend international politics. However, his theory was more

correct at that time “during the Cold War” compared to nowadays, but still to a good extent is a valid theory. Indeed, the critics directed to his work show different outcomes than what the theory is predicting at the first place. For example, European integration and the end of the Cold War were not in line with the theory’s expectations. However, it is possible to be argued whether the choices of units have shaped the change of the structure or the units’ behaviors have been shaped by the structure, but the aim of the review is not this. I came to a conclusion that with careful application, even today Waltz’s theory of international politics is a vital instrument to look at international relations. The developments and uncertainties that are expected in the international system will defiantly require an update in the international relations theories including Waltz’s theory of international politics.

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