

6th EWIS, Krakow, June 2019

Call for Papers

**The next 100 Years' Crisis -
The Realist Tradition in IR as (the) *Enlightenment*?**



Workshop Convenor:

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Submission Deadline of individual papers: 13th January 2019

Rationale and background of the theme

The realist tradition in International Relations is maybe the most misunderstood one. Most IR scholars, may they be in the liberal, constructivist or post-structuralist camp, think (or just argue, even they should know better) that 'Realism' is a monolithic and parsimonious theory which has evolved from the beginning and during the Cold War in the U.S. as a guideline for policy-makers to contain the Soviet Union, to establish a bipolar balance of power-configuration within the international system, and to prolong the 'unipolar moment' after the end of the Cold War from the 1990s on. Mostly in mainstream IR theories textbooks and articles, it is suggested that realists are conservative and backward-oriented and share an affirmative understanding of power politics, that they just think and argue in terms of material power capabilities and categories of the national interest, and that they have no sense of ethics/morality in politics, liberal values/democracy, or any forms of political integration. What is really appalling, and alarming (from a truthful and real realist standpoint), Neoconservatives in the U.S. or Russian realists supporting the Putin regime both suggest that realism provides policy-makers with the core insights guiding and shaping foreign policy into asserted and

seemingly rational and appropriate directions in times of either a ‘war on terror’, or the decline of the Western liberal order, and power shifts in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, or East Asia. As a consequence, realism is associated with crude and reckless power politics, ideologies such as revisionism, nationalism, and populism, and conflicts and wars within and between states – exactly those social movements and forces all realists *actually* are arguing and warning *against*, and try at least to critically engage with, if not to overcome in order to establish a kind of order leading to stability and peace. Anyway, what we call the “Western liberal order” is in its deepest crisis ever, with many analogies and parallels to the late 1920s and 1930s. It seems that E.H. Carr’s *Twenty Years’ Crisis* is back 80 years later. And the question, then, is whether there is an expectable next Twenty, Eighty, or Hundred Years’ Crisis in international politics? Given that the realist tradition in IR was founded exactly in this interwar period in Europe against the background of WWI, the failure of the League of Nations, and the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, it is time and of added value to rethink realism what it was and still *is*: a particular - *realist* - kind of *enlightenment*, teaching us something about the inevitable dynamics of power in all social relations, but also offering us a guideline to deal with these dynamics and crises coming along with this, and offering us alternative ways to rescue the international order, Western democracy at home, and stability and peace *in line* with the insuperable but well-known social forces and rules of benign power politics.

Aim of the Workshop

The aim of the workshop is threefold: to bring together realists and critical voices to (re)define the state of the art of the realist tradition; to present different - classical, neo-/structural and neoclassical - realist visions of international order and states’ foreign and security policies; to discuss political challenges for stability and peace in Europe/Eurasia, and possible scenarios and solutions. Realists claim to understand power as the main driving factor in politics, and to draw prudent lessons of the past for a better future, and to offer a *reformist agenda*. Consequently, the focus of this workshop is whether and how far realism can serve as *enlightenment tradition*, as Michael C. Williams argues in his 2013 EJIR article *In the beginning: The International Relations enlightenment and the ends of International Relations theory*, and whether realism can help us to make sense of recent tempestuous developments, but also whether realism offers normative and critical perspectives against reckless power politics.

Possible paper topics/themes

The workshop convenor invites to submit papers that address the following issues and themes from different perspectives within the realist tradition:

(1) The history & variety of the realist tradition in Europe and the U.S. in the 20th century

- Who are the key figures in realism, and in which political, academic/intellectual and institutional contexts have they been socialized? What are the differences and commonalities of realist approaches and thinkers within the tradition?
- Is there any *enlightenment* movement in the realist tradition in IR? What do you understand by the term?
- And if so, who are the *proponents of the Enlightenment*, and why are they, and what has been/is the purpose of these thinkers?

(2) The explanatory power of realism as a theory of international politics & foreign policy

- How far do realist theories help us making sense of and understand the ongoing dynamics of/within international politics? What about the configuration within the system in terms of polarity, the idea of a balance of power or a Concert of Europe, and other neo-realist core assumptions? Are they still valid today?
- How far do (neoclassical) realist theories help us to analyze the foreign policies of great, middle sized and small powers' foreign policies in Europe and Eurasia?
- Which role do material power considerations, (mis)perceptions (of threat, states' intentions, power capabilities etc.), ideology and geopolitical power shifts play in the foreign policy decision-making process?

(3) The political and theoretical relevance of realism today

- Is there a return of revisionism, nationalism and power competition in Europe and Eurasia? If so, how do these developments become manifest and observable? And why are revisionist states revisionist (again)? How can realism and realists identify these dynamics, and deal with?
- If there are (again) revisionist states, what does this mean for the European/Eurasian security architecture (NATO, OSCE) and the EU/European Integration Process?
- What does this mean for the realist tradition in IR/Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)? What are the political and theoretical challenges and incentives for realism in the 21st century?