

6th EWIS, Krakow, June 2019

Call for Papers

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

Workshop Convenor:

Alex Reichwein (Justus-Liebig University Gießen / Gießen Graduate School

(alexander.reichwein@sowi.uni-giessen.de)

Submission Deadline of individual papers: 13th January 2019

Rationale and background of the theme

The realist tradition in International Relations is 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 in the Cold War in the U.S. as a guideline to contain the Soviet Union, and to establish a bipolar balance of power-configuration in the international system, and to prolong the unipolar moment after 1990. Mostly in mainstream IR theories textbooks and articles, it is said that realists are conservative and backward-oriented, that they just think in terms of material power capabilities and categories of the national interest, and that they have no appreciation and sense of ethics/morality, 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 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 war 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.

Anyway, what we call the "Western liberal order" is in its deepest crisis ever, with many analogies and parallels to the 1930s. It seems that E.H. Carr's Twenty Years' Crisis is back. And the question is whether there is an expectable next 100 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 kind of *Enlightenment* to rescue the international order, democracy at home, and stability in line with the insuperable but well-known social forces and rules of benign power politics.

Aim of the Workshop

The workshop asks how IR scholars can and should deal with ages of crises. Its aim is threefold: to bring together realists and critical voices to 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 peace and security 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 helps to make sense of recent tempestuous developments, but also to offer normative and critical perspectives against reckless power politics and towards peace and stability, and democracy.

Possible topics

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

(1) The history and variety of the Realist Tradition in Europe and the United States

- 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 realism? What do you understand by the term?
- And if, who are the proponents of the Enlightenment, and why are they, and what is the purpose of these thinkers?

(2) The explanatory power of Realism as a theory of international politics and foreign policy

- How far do realist theories help us making sense of and understand international politics and foreign policy?
- How far do 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?

(3) The relevance of Realism today

- Is there a return of revisionism, nationalism and power competition in Europe / Eurasia?
- What does this mean for the security architecture (NATO, OSCE) and the EU?
- What does this mean for the realist tradition in IR, what are the challenges and incentives?