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# HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF IDEALISM VS. REALISM

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## Abstract

*Various theories in international relations offer multiple models of explanation of relations between states, but most of them are based on the idea that states act in accordance with their national interests. In fact, in its essence state interests include the need to maintain security, sovereignty and the development of the economy. Classical realists such as: Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau, see at the conflict as a natural state in international relations, not as a consequence that can be attributed to historical circumstances, wicked leaders, disturbed socio-political systems, or international disagreements. The basis of the theory of idealists such as: Grotius, Kant and Bentham are the denial of the right to war, because they consider it is possible to establish an authority capable of maintaining peace. From the perspective of the idealists, wars are caused by egoistic interests of state leaders at the expense of the interests of the citizens.*

*Keywords: realism, idealism, war, peace, politics*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of idealism stems from the old political philosophy, which is, encountered in texts by several authors of ancient philosophers. Aristotle himself, with his notions of justice as a perfect virtue, strongly influenced the development of political concepts, especially until the beginning of the middle ages.

The existence of laws and international organizations, for the idealists is inevitably in the world of international politics. That is, the society should raise to the pedestal those organizations whose goal is the protection and promotion of peace and security in the world and to eliminate those that only declaratively promote peace.

Realism starts from the theory that poor human nature leads to conflicts, but also to the incapacity to solve them because of the selfishness of a man who sees his own enemy in the other. Therefore, the significance of military and state power is crucial, from the aspect of this theoretical approach. For the so-called classical realism, conflict and anarchy are quite normal phenomena in international relations, setting power as the main theme of the realistic conception (Kant 2007).

Realism focuses mostly on state security and power. States are interested only in themselves, and they are rational actors who only strive for power and seek to maximize their safety and chances of survival. Any cooperation between states is explained as functional in order to maximize the security of each individual state (as opposed to many idealistic reasons).

## THE FOUNDERS OF REALISTIC THEORY

### *The Realism of Thucydides*

Thucydides is the first true scholar in the field of international politics and the research of thought in this area, starts with him. Unlike the contemporaries who saw the war as "God's work," Thucydides has explained war through human nature and through basic human impulses, such as aggression, fear and egoism. Inevitably, Thucydides also saw the role of power, so he concluded that the powerful do what they can and weak what they must. Thucydides with his political thought removes the role of religious interpretations in politics.

In the analysis of all social processes, Thucydides starts from the man, from his nature, the fear and personal interest that make the man to endeavor to rule with the others. Based on this, according to Thucydides, the strong absorbs the weak, so his power poses a threat to the weak (Maleski 2001). Similarly to human beings, also the states behave in their relations - weak states have the option of joining the powerful or seeking protection from another force. Fear and concern for the security of states in international society, as well as the polarization of power that arises in their relations, cause war. However, the paradox of war is that the states involved in it, regardless of how strong they are, begin the process of their weakening. It is known that war brings bad consequences such as death, hunger, increased taxes, and illnesses. With this, states begin to degenerate (Maleski 2001).

According to Thucydides, there is no difference between the personal motives and the motives of the community, i.e. there is no difference between personal and political motives. For Thucydides, the motives are security, fame and interest. But since other people want the same thing, the path to achieving the goals is through a competition for power, because the power itself brings the fulfillment of the three main human motives. War is the most extreme power contest. Similar to man, the power of one country determines its place in international politics. Always dominates that side that has more army, money and ships. But the reasons for the war Thucydides not only finds in the violence of man but also in the structure of the international system of states. The anarchic nature of international order makes states suspicious of the rise of power in other countries:

While it is not true that there is no morality in international politics, moral choice is limited by the elementary security of the state. Sometimes such a choice does not exist. The necessity of the war, for example, forces the survival of one's own country to be put before the survival of another, in the same way as when a parent who sees two children in a mortal danger, in the absence of a greater choice, is determined to save his own, leaving to die the stranger (Maleski 2001).

In the early 20th century, Max Weber in this way added this thought to the Economic Ethics of World Religions: "The interests, material or ideal, and not the ideas, directly rule human action. But the 'images of the world' that created the ideas often act as railroads on the track, according to which the dynamics of interests continue to move" (Weber 1948).

### *"The Prince" of Nicolas Machiavelli*

In the period between Thucydides and Machiavelli, church laws dominated the human mind, but they were seriously shaken when the contemporary time begins, that is, with the advent of the Renaissance period. Machiavelli is the thinker who has renewed his scientific approach in researching interstate relations. However, a bad reputation follows Machiavelli and it is due to the lack of understanding of the political context in which his work was created. It is necessary to understand the time in which Machiavelli lives and works, in order to understand his contribution in revealing the hypocrisy of that time and of that morality. Machiavelli's merits are that he, by means of his political thought, refutes the religious theories that surrounded the human mind at the time. Many theorists of that time were not indifferent to Christian teaching, so it inevitably took up part in their political theories. The very political ideas themselves were mixed with the religious, i.e. there were no norms of civil behavior that were exempt

from religious norms. For the first time, Machiavelli applied pure science in analyzing the political phenomena and therefore we consider him to be the first contemporary political thinker who threw out everything that is not political from the political theory. The political man, for him, was not a saint but a man pushed into reality, in the battle for power, fame, profit and status, and created enemies with people who were like him, were basically driven by the same motives. His approach to the analysis of international politics understood everyone's position, even position of Italy's ruthless enemies (Wolin 2009).

The "Prince" (Italian: *Il Principe*) is a political debate by the political theorist, Nicola Machiavelli. It was written in 1513, and was originally titled "For the Principals" (*De Principatibus*) (Mattingly, 1995). According to Machiavelli, the greatest moral good is a virtuous and stable state, and so the actions aimed at protecting and preserving the state are justified, even if they are cruel (the famous thought of Machiavelli "The goal justifies the means") (Mattingly, 1995). However, Machiavelli firmly advises that the ruler must not afford to be hated. He says: "... the wise ruler should be strengthened by his power, and not the power of others; as I have already said, he must endeavor not to become hated. It is best to be loved, but at the same time be afraid of you; however, if both are not possible, then you better be frightened than you are loved." (Machiavelli 1513).

In the introduction to "The Prince", the author draws out effective methods for managing several types of principals (for example, newly discovered vs. inherited). Machiavelli explained to the reader, assuming that he is a member of the Medici family, the best ways of acquiring, maintaining and protecting the state. In doing so, the author determines that what is necessary must be achieved, regardless of the route.

A self-governing ruler is one who can confront any enemy on the battlefield. However, a ruler who relies solely on help from a side and stands in self-defense is not self-sufficient. If he cannot gather a strong army, but must count on self-defense, then he must establish the city. The likelihood of attacking a well-fortified city is unlikely and even if that happens, most armies cannot withstand a long-standing siege. However, during the siege the virtuous maintains high morale among the subjects, removing the dissidents. Thus, as long as the city is adequately defended and has a sufficient supply, the wise ruler can withstand any siege.

The main preoccupation of one ruler should be warfare, or preparations for him. The hereditary ruler with a war maintains his power, and the private citizen thus gets the opportunity to rise to power. Machiavelli advises that the ruler should often go hunting in order to keep fit and to learn the terrain of his kingdom well. In this way, he has the best opportunity to learn how to best defend his territory or attack territories similar to his. For intellectual power, Machiavelli advises the study of the lives and works of the great military leaders, for the ruler to repeat their successes, and at the same time

to learn from their mistakes. A ruler who is diligent in peacetime will be ready in times of distress. Machiavelli writes: "Thus, when fate will turn against him, he will be ready to defy her." (Machiavelli 1513).

In response to the question of whether it is better to love you or to be afraid, Machiavelli says, "The answer, of course, is to be loved, but at the same time be scared. But since both rarely go together, when it has to be chosen, it's much safer to be afraid than to love you" (Mattingly 1995). He argues that the promises made in peacetime are not always maintained in times of distress; while promises made with fear are held out of fear. However, the ruler must be careful not to be scared so that he will become hated, which is very possible. Machiavelli says that the ruler must not interfere in the property of the subjects, their wives, and their lives without proper justification.

As far as the ruler's army is concerned, fear is absolutely necessary to maintain the order and unity among a large number of soldiers, and therefore the ruler should not worry about cruelty in this regard. Cruelty is imperative for a military leader who is the only way to maintain absolute respect. Machiavelli makes a comparison of two great military leaders: Hannibal and Scipio African. Although the Hannibal's army was made up of soldiers of various nationalities and races, they never rebelled because they feared their leader. On the other hand, Scipio's soldiers were known for rebellion and troubles, suggesting that according to Machiavelli, the cruelty of one ruler determine his successful rule.

### ***About the Human Nature: Thomas Hobbes***

Hobbes completely cleared up the medieval teaching of the state as the most perfect natural community, which is part of the world divine order. Hobbes considered it a misconception that man by nature was a social being. On the contrary, by nature, according to Hobbes, man is a selfish creature who strives for self-preservation, at all costs, i.e. he tries to keep his life even at the expense of others' harm. Human enduring striving for governance with other people disappears only when a person dies (Hobbes 1955).

According to Hobbes, almost all people are equal in their physical and spiritual abilities and therefore have the same right of all things. Because of the tendency to take possession of these things, people are fighting each other, striving to destroy them. In other words, by its very nature, the human being is a wolf (Latin: *Homo homini lupus est*). Because every person is a potential enemy of the other, everyone is afraid to be attacked and destroyed, whilst fear and mistrust lead to war.

Namely, the best way for man to defend himself from other people is to frustrate their intentions, completely subordinating them. Hence, the natural state of the people is characterized by a war of all against all (Latin: *Bellum omnium contra omnes*).

In that state, there is neither righteousness nor peace, but everyone has the right to do everything necessary to protect and suppress other people, so that human life is "lonely, miserable, dirty, cruel and short" (Hobbes 1955).

The fear of death and the aspiration for a peaceful life encourages people to seek a way out of the state of constant war, and the reason tells us that the exit is in peace. In this, reason reveals natural laws, and under "natural law," Hobbes implies a general rule of reason that prescribes what a man must, and which he must not do to succeed in life. All natural laws stem from the first, basic law that says everyone should strive for peace, while there is hope to achieve it, and when peace cannot be realized, then war can begin. From this basic law comes the second law, according to which, if the others are ready to do the same, he himself must renounce his natural right to everything and be satisfied with such freedom to others as they would be allowed himself in relation to himself. Thus, this law requires a person to abandon those rights which, if retained, prevent peace between people.

Hence the third law arises, which demands that we be just and respect the agreements with which our rights have been transferred to other people. There are also other laws, for example: to be grateful for benevolence, to forgive the insults of people who sincerely repent and so on (Hobbes 1955).

The state arises on the basis of an agreement by which people inhabiting a certain territory transfer part of their natural rights to one person (monarchy) or to a group of people (democracy), whereby the ruler should provide them with a peaceful life. Hobbes defines the state as an absolute power in which the sovereign (the ruler) has all the power, and all subjects must be submissive. In doing so, the sovereign has unlimited rights: he decides on peace or war, prescribes rewards and punishments, judges people, determines which doctrines and religions are right, and so on. Also, the people have no right to forcefully change the ruler, i.e. it must not raise rebellions and revolutions because it would mean that the people are rebelling against themselves, because the sovereign rules in the name of the people themselves.

According to Hobbes, the absolute power means that there is no separate and independent legislative or judicial power, nor that ecclesiastical authority can be over the ruler's power (Hobbes 1955).

### *On the State of War: Jean Jacques Rousseau*

As a representative of the radical conception of the natural-legal theory of civil society, Rousseau particularly draws attention on two essential states. First, Rousseau, unlike the other theorists of the natural-legal (contractual) theory, sees the society that comes through the conclusion of a social contract as a "moral and overall organism" as a "social man" that "its unity, life and will" is acquired as a result of the "alienation" (in

terms of their organic transfer) of the natural rights of the creators of that agreement and their "transfer" to the new state (organic) community they create. Every citizen - said Rousseau - to be completely independent of all others, and completely dependent on the state. This is always achieved by the same means, because only the power of the state makes the freedom of its members. "Civil laws occur precisely in the second relationship" (Rousseau 1978).

Rousseau makes the difference between the will of all (*volonte de tous*) and the general will (*volonte generale*); "The latter sees only the general benefit, and the first - the benefits of the individuals, and therefore it is only a set of individual wills ... For general will come to the true expression, it is very important in the state not to have separate societies and every citizen to vote according to own confidence" (Rousseau 1978).

In the Social Contract, Rousseau begins with the idea that a just society is based on an agreement that will guarantee the equality and freedom of all citizens. This agreement applies to all participants, that is, all citizens of the society. In this social contract everyone gives up his natural freedom to gain civil liberty. People's sovereignty is the main principle of the social contract. The indivisibility of sovereignty is another basic theory, by which it is stated that the power of the sovereign (meaning society as sovereign) will not be divided, nor can it be separated for some individual interest, because the individual interests are contradictory to the general interest, whose fulfillment is the main goal of the social contract. Rousseau sees the deal as a result of the "natural state" in which the stronger is governed. For him, the right of the stronger cannot be the guiding principle of a society because it is disproportionate with the general interest, and therefore with the social contract: "the strongest is never strong enough to be a master until he transforms his power into law and subordination in duty." (Rousseau 1978).

The rejection of the social contract is the return to the natural state that is primitive, pre-social, tyrannical and useless. A society that violates its social contract ceases to be called a society. With these words, Rousseau opens the section: "I want to figure out whether there may be some legitimate and secure rule in the civil order, taking people into account as they are and the laws as they can be. I will give the task, in this work, to mix what is right with what interest attributes as long as justice and benefit are not completely separated" (Rousseau 1978).

The Social Contract is a philosophical-political discourse that asks how a person, after overcoming the natural state and entering the social state, can create a social order in the service of general interest. The agreement Rousseau talks requires each individual to give up his rights to acquire the legal equality of society. For every person to acquire freedom, he must be alienated from nature. The legitimacy of the treaty rests on the fact that man does not alienate in the true sense of the word (nor does he make



the exchange of natural law nor gives it to anyone else), but he realizes that the social contract is opposed to the existence of the natural law.

In the second book, Rousseau examines the legislative problems: "Through the social agreement, we give the existence and life of the political body: now we need to give him mobility and will through the legislation" (Rousseau 1762). On the other hand, the question remains what is the law: "when the people rule the whole nation, it takes self-consideration (...) So what we regulate through law will be as general as the will of the law. I call this act a law. Everything that Rousseau writes, he tries to point out that everything is in the service of the ruling general interest. After this, it begins to elaborate all the differences of the political body, beginning with the legislative power.

The human being, according to Rousseau, is a lonely individual, he must learn in the natural world, far from the influence of society, which would spoil him. For him, only the influence of nature is essential. Like the famous "empty board", his mind will receive impressions in a row and will develop in harmony with a person free of any bad social influence (Temkov 2014).

In an unnatural state, people are selfish and do not think of the general good, while in the natural state, first, it is the general benefit, harmonized with love for oneself. Man by nature is good. Therefore, the highest quality of human beings is the conscience, which elevates it to the image of God. Rousseau writes: "Oh, conscience, conscience, divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice, trusted leader of an unquenchable and limited, but intelligent and free creature, an unmistakable judge of good and evil, giving man a similarity with God, thanks for the perfection of our nature and the morality of our deeds" (Rousseau 1762). According to Rousseau, a man is naturally good, but he must not be spoiled by civilization. The progress of science, art and economy should not lead to the loss of a healthy natural harmony with nature. Civilization, according to Rousseau, progressed with huge strides and began to destroy nature, so we are more talking about the necessity of harmony with nature.

"The natural state of humanity does not exist anymore, it may have never existed, and probably it will not exist - but for it we should have the right ideas, so that we can study our current situation well. How much crime, wars and murders, how much trouble and suffering would it save the human race who would shout to their fellowmen? Do not listen to the deceiver, you will fall by forgetting that the fruits of the land belong to all, and the earth to anyone. Someone thinks he is master over others, yet he is a bigger slave than them" (Rousseau 1917).



## THE FOUNDERS OF IDEALISTIC THEORY

### *Laws of War and Peace of Hugo Grotius*

In his work "Laws of War and Peace", Hugo Grotius, in defining the war, quotes Cicero, who defines the war as dealing with conflicts using force. In fact, war is the state of those who struggle with power; this general definition includes all types of war; excludes private war because it has its origin since ancient times and has the same nature as the public war. Further in his work, Grotius explains that private is the war that runs between people who do not have authority, and a war is being held between people who have authority and authority. He mentions the third kind of war, which is the so-called mixed war as a combination of a party with and a party without authority to conduct a war (Grotius 2012).

Further in this work, Grotius opens the question of the righteousness of the war, wondering if any war is just, or is it at all permitted to fight. Once more, Grotius starts from Cicero's points of view, which, as a basis for reviewing this question, has taken on the natural law, explaining that every animal, from birth itself, is guided by the natural principles of survival, while avoiding actions that could involve a personal breakdown. In fact, according to him, every person is important "to have all the parts of his body in the correct order" than to "be decomposed and distorted" (Grotius 2012).

Therefore, everyone strives to maintain his natural state and to reject all things that are contrary to the natural state. According to Cicero: "There is a law that is not written but it is born with each one of us, a law that we have not learned, received, read, but comes with our nature. We are born on the basis of this law - that if our life is put under threat in any sense, under arms of the enemy or anyone else, every way of ensuring security is morally upright" (Grotius 2012).

### *Immanuel Kant's Peace, Morality and Politics*

Kant is one of the most influential European thinkers and the last great philosopher of the Enlightenment. He is one of the most significant representatives of Western philosophy. His Critique of the Pure Reason (*Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*) marks a milestone in the history of philosophy and the beginning of modern philosophy. Not only in the theory of cognition, but also in ethics and aesthetics with works like Criticism of the Practical Mind and Criticism of the Power of the Trial, but also with certain writings related to religion and law, creates a new comprehensive perspective in philosophy (Kant 1998). Writing for peace, morality and politics, Immanuel Kant says that one who takes power once in his hands will not allow the people to prescribe laws, that is, that a state that is free from external influences will not be subjected to decisions of

other states that would regulate the exercise of their rights in relation to them. Thus, if there is no freedom and morality that rests on freedom, then surely politics is all practical wisdom, and the concept of justice is an empty thought. For Kant, it is easy to imagine a moral politician who chooses the political principles that are in line with morality, but it is unthinkable for him to be a political moralist, that is, a man who shapes morality to be in line with the benefit of the statesmen in a particular situation.

According to Kant, when in the basis of the state or in its relations with other states there will be some irregularity that can be corrected, the principle pursued by the moral politician is that it has a duty to investigate as soon as possible the shortcoming to be repaired in a manner that is in accordance with an adjacent law, as a model represented by reason.

Speaking of despotism, Kant points out those despotic moralists, sinning in practice, often violate the rules of political caution through measures that they apply overly, but the skills they experience will gradually deter and guide them in a better way.

Hence, objectively or theoretically, there is no conflict between morality and politics. However, subjectively, this conflict exists in the egoistic interests of man. The political moralist can say: The ruler and the people, or nations and nations, do not inflict any injustice on each other when, with violence or deception, they fight against each other, even though they do wrong because they do not respect the concept of righteousness, which is the only one who can establish eternal peace. When one violates his duty to the other, who also does not obey the laws in relation to him, everyone will delude what he deserved when they are mutually destroyed.

True politicians cannot make a step forward without the necessary respect for morality. Human rights must always remain sacred, regardless of the sacrifices that the ruler must submit. There should be no compromise with regard to the rights of the people and require some secondary solution to the pragmatic right that is somewhere between morally and usefully. All policy must be folded before the righteous, to reach the stage when it illuminates with an immortal shine (Maleski 2000).

According to Kant, freedom is the only basis for the existence of the state. His concept is the theoretical basis of all modern political theories, whereby promoting freedom in a single and primordial condition of the state is at the same time a key argument against all utilitarian conceptions of power. Kant's understanding of freedom is a philosophical inspiration of liberal democracy, as the rational and ethically most appropriate model of the state (Kant 2007).

### *Peace among Peoples: Jeremy Bentham*

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) based his ethical teaching on anthropological-psychological facts, according to which man aspires to avoid suffering and pain in order to achieve satisfaction. According to him, man is sovereignty governed by pain and pleasure. In developing his own ethical theory, Bentham has built up a kind of moral arithmetic or ethical account that includes several important criteria for determining the value of the pleasures themselves. According to him, such criteria can be reduced to seven basic ones: Intensity; Duration; Visibility or Uncertainty; Proximity or Distance; Fertility; Cleanliness; Volume i.e. number of persons to whom pleasure is spreading. Even the seventh feature includes Jeremy Bentham and utilitarianism in the history of well-known ethicists. The appreciation of pleasure, i.e. its breadth and quantity give Bentham a broad social and humanistic dimension: the greatest possible happiness for the largest possible number of people, satisfaction will be more valuable if it spreads to a larger number of people (Majhoshev 2012/13).

In one of his essays, he offers the world a plan for universal and eternal peace (Maleski 2000). The Bentham plan proposes two basic proposals, namely reducing and fixing the extent of the military power of several nations that make up the European system and the emancipation of distant dependent territories of each country. The ultimate goal of the plan he proposes is to propose unrestricted power, saving the state and peace. In fact, it devotes its plan to all civilized nations, but especially to the United Kingdom and France.

First, focusing on the UK, Bentham says he is not in the interest of having any dependent territories abroad, because, according to him, distant territories increase the chances of war and rarely colonies are a source of profit for the state.


Secondly, Bentham believes it is not in the UK's interest to have an alliance, offensive or defensive with any country, because there is a danger of a war arising from any alliance.

A third proposal Bentham gives to Britain is that there should be no agreement with any force to gain an advantage in trade because the volume of trade that a country is able to implement is limited in its scope capital. It should not be assumed that the volume of trade is unlimited.

As the fourth suggestion, Bentham states that it is not in the interest of the state to maintain naval force greater than that necessary to protect its trade from pirates, since such force is unnecessary, save for the protection of the colonies and for waging war. Continuing with recommendations for France, Bentham concludes that there is no reason to be afraid of any other nation or nations, nor do we demand anything from them, nor have we what we can say or hear from them that cannot be the same publicly as public laws (Maleski 2000).

## CONCLUSION

These famous idealists and realists expounded their views taking into account the circumstances in which they worked. The classical realists perceive the conflict as a natural state in international relations, not as a consequence that can be attributed to historical circumstances, wicked leaders, disturbed socio-political systems, or international disagreements. The classical realists agree that the behavior of states is usually rational. The assumption behind this key point is that states are guided by the logic of "national interests", most commonly defined within sustainability, security, power and opportunities. Therefore, the significance of military and state power is crucial, from the aspect of this theoretical approach. For the so-called classical realism, conflict and anarchy are quite normal phenomena in international relations, setting power as the main theme of the realistic conception.

Idealism, as a theoretical approach, denies the right to war, because it considers it possible to establish an authority capable of maintaining peace. But while such authority is not set up globally, it requires a strict adherence to the rules of war in order to minimize the consequences of the war. 

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