

# **Neorealism and New Life for Realism: Kenneth Waltz**

**Morgenthau's work formed the basis for many other authors in the Realist tradition. Yet it was not until 1979 that Kenneth N. Waltz attempted to reformulate Realism in a new and distinctive way. His aim was to cure the defects with earlier theories of international relations, including classical realism, by applying a more scientific approach. The approach he took in *Theory of International Politics* became known as Neorealism.**

**While classical Realists saw international politics in terms of the characteristics of states and their interaction with each other, Waltz believed that there was a level above this. According to Waltz, "The idea that international politics can be thought of as a system with a precisely defined structure is Neorealism's fundamental departure from traditional realism". The conditions of the system as a whole influenced state behaviour, not just state level factors.**

**By concentrating on the nature of the system-level structure, Waltz avoided the need to make assumptions about human nature, morality, power and interest. Neorealists were thus able to see power in a different way. For the classical Realists power was both a means and an end, and rational state behaviour was simply accumulating the most power. Neorealists found a better guide was provided by assuming that the ultimate state interest was in security, and while gathering power often ensured that, in some cases it merely provoked an arms race. Yet while power was no longer the prime motivator, its distribution was the major factor determining the nature of the structure.**