

What is Realism II

Of the threads that make up the Realist school, the most important ideas include:

- **International relations are amenable of objective study. Events can be described in terms of laws, in much the way that a theory in the sciences might be described. These laws remain true at all places and times.**
- **The state is the most important actor. At times the state may be represented by the city-state, empire, kingdom or tribe. Implicit in this is that supra-national structures, sub-national ones and individuals are of lesser importance. Thus the United Nations, Shell, the Papacy, political parties, etc, are all relatively unimportant.**
- **The first corollary is that the international system is one of anarchy, with no common sovereign.**
- **A second corollary is that the state is a unitary actor. The state acts in a consistent way, without any sign of divided aims.**
- **Further, state behaviour is rational - or can be best approximated by rational decision-making. States act as though they logically assess the costs and benefits of each course open to them.**
- **States act to maximise either their security or power. The distinction here often proves moot as the optimum method to guarantee security is frequently equated to maximising power.**
- **States often rely on force or the threat of force to achieve their ends.**
- **The most important factor in determining what happens in international relations is the distribution of power.**
- **Ethical considerations are usually discounted. Universal moral values are difficult to define, and unachievable without both survival and power.**