

Maciej Herbut

University of Wrocław (Poland)

Renata Kunert-Milcarz

University of Wrocław (Poland)

The Explanatory Power of Structural Realism in the 21st Century: the Eastern Partnership, Russian Expansionism and the War in Ukraine

Abstract: While the scope of the paper is to assess the actions undertaken by the European Union towards the FSU-CIS (Former Soviet Union, Commonwealth of Independent States) which was manifested through the Eastern Partnership Initiative in the years 2008–2014, the focus will be centred on theoretical concepts and their ‘explanatory power’ rather than actions undertaken by European or Russian decision makers. Taking that under account, this essay will critically assess the explanatory power of the neorealist school of thought which although overtly criticized, still remains a viable tool in explaining the processes occurring in international relations.

Keywords: *neorealism; structural realism; international relations theory; Russian foreign policy; Eastern Partnership*

Introduction

In the September/October 2014 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Mearsheimer wrote an article titled “*Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault*” (Mearsheimer, 2014). The title is self-explanatory, strong and controversial. To what extent can we put the blame on the United States and its European Allies for promoting democracy in Ukraine? In 2014 after the overthrow of Yanukovych the new Ukrainian government signed a Deep and

Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement (DCFTA), which envisioned economic assistance and institutional reform. (Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Kościński, 2015). The Russian response to the aforementioned events were swift and resulted in the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and a prolonged conflict between Ukraine and the so-called pro-Russian separatists. The representatives of the structural realist school seem to have an answer to this question. They claim that the incursion of the West into the Russian 'close abroad' or 'privileged sphere of influence' was considered a violation of Russian *raison d'état*¹.

The main objective of this paper is to assess the explanatory value of structural realism. Although the theory has been widely criticized, this essay will make an attempt of defending its basic assumptions. Although neorealism/structural realism seems helpless when cultural or more complex economic processes are concerned, the explanatory power of the theory is of particular use when explaining the behaviours of the Russian Federation.

The paper will be divided into three parts. In the first part, the main concepts of neorealism will be introduced. In the second part a critical assessment of both theoretical as well as explanatory value of the theory will be assessed. Finally in the third, last section the policies of the EU regarding its eastern frontiers as well as those of the Russian Federation will be assessed. Since the paper focuses mostly on theoretical aspects of neorealism, these particular policies, including the Eastern Partnership initiative, will be of secondary importance.

Waltz and Mearsheimer: The Principles of Defensive and Offensive Realism

The founding volume of neorealism was the *Theory of International Relations* written by Kenneth Waltz. By drawing from economics, Waltz created a structural model of international relations which introduced a 'method' in comprehending the complexity of reality. In his theory Waltz focuses only on the processes that occur on the international level and omits those that derive from the national level (Waltz, 1979, p. 71). This attempt of simplifying reality and ignoring the actions of individuals or state institutions was overly criticized. However, such omissions were exactly what the author had in mind. He wanted to isolate, scrutinize and understand a reality

¹ Adepts of Russian history today take the fact that Russia, as the continuator of the Soviet Union, will follow its footsteps and will not hesitate to resort to military power, just as in case of the USSR didn't it case of economic and political changes in their satellite states Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. (Chafetz, 1993; Thorun, 2009; Goldman 2008, 152–153).

which other ways would be impossible to comprehend (Waltz, 1979, p. 10). In other words, Kenneth Waltz is not only the ‘father’ of neorealist thought, he established the foundation of macropolitical analysis in international relations which remains an indispensable element of IR inquiry till this day.

Waltz’s theory of international relations was inspired by Adam Smith’s microeconomic model. Using Waltz’s words “Reasoning by analogy is helpful where one can move from a domain for which theory is well developed to one where it is not (...) Reasoning by analogy is permissible where different domains are structurally similar” (Waltz, 1979, str. 89). The main concepts such as ‘international structure’, ‘anarchy’ and ‘self-help’ were directly ‘converted’ from the ‘microeconomic understandings’ of how Adam Smith perceived his ‘economic man’ - a single-minded profit maximiser. The difference however was that the ‘profit maximiser’ was not an individual, but a state which became the basic unit of analysis. States pursue their own interests and **survival** is their ultimate goal. In this pursuit they can mostly rely on themselves. Here we arrive at the to the concept of ‘self-help’ (Waltz, 1979, pp. 82–92). **Anarchy** as the ‘**ordering principle**’ in an international system is another central concept that assures ‘structural coherency’ (Waltz, 1979, p. 93). The juxtaposing of words ‘anarchy’ and ‘coherency’ may at first seem to be a paradox. However, according to Waltz, anarchy refers to the fact that (just as in world economics), there is no central government that coordinates the domain of international relations. (Waltz, 1979, p.89). Last, but definitely not least, **non-state actors** are not omitted in Waltz’s theory. They are simply understood as agents which are instrumentally used to serve the purposes of their principles, the states (Waltz, 1979, p. 94). States can vary significantly in terms of their **capabilities**. However, their **functions** are what makes them similar to each other regardless of their size and wealth. In such manner states tend to ‘duplicate’ the activities of other states and show a strikingly ‘uniform’ way of behaviour in relation to one another. Thus, what makes states ‘**functionally undifferentiated**’ is the nature of anarchy which prevents them from pursuing ‘**specialization**’ as it is in hierarchic/national structures. Structural alterations may occur due to the ‘**uneven distribution of capabilities**’ between states. The relationship between agency (states) and structure is reciprocal. States (due to their capabilities) may influence the structure and (what is a distinguishing feature of structural realism) **the structure may also determine the states**. In other words, structural conditions may either constrain or provide opportunities for states. (Waltz, 1979, p. 96).

We can distinguish two main schools of neorealist thought. While **Defensive neorealists** perceive states as **rational** actors who look to their own security and restrain themselves from expansionist behaviours (Waltz, 1979), **offensive neorealists** consider states as actors who will expand if ‘A window of opportunity’ appears

(Mearsheimer, 1994; Mearsheimer, 2001; Snyder, 1991). Summarizing the basic principles of neorealism are as follows:

- the international **structure** is determined by the ordering principle: **anarchy**,
- the structure is composed of **functionally undifferentiated units (states)** and their ultimate goal is **survival**,
- states will refer to ‘**self-help**’ and count on their own means that will assure them survival,
- changes in the **distribution of capabilities** between units are ipso-facto changes in the international structure itself.

The Critics of Neorealist Thought: an Assessment

One could distinguish two lines of criticism. The first concerns the **applicability** and **validity** in assessing the behaviours of states. The second, which refers to the **value of the theory itself as a systematic inquiry**.

Concerning the first point, both neoliberalism and constructivism are direct responses to the neorealist view of international relations. We will not indulge into detailed analysis what these schools represent. What we will do is present in what ways they contradict with neorealism. It is needless to say that to a greater or smaller extent both schools are inspired by a structuralist interpretation of international relations which means that:

- analysed processes occur on the international arena, not beneath the level of the nation state;
- the state is still the main unit of analysis;
- both schools are (with certain exceptions) general theories of international relations.

Considering the differences between neoliberalism and neorealism, there are three aspects that are three points to be outlined:

- the role of international law and international organizations, which according to the neoliberals are underestimated by the neorealists. (Baldwin 1993; Koehane & Nye, 2012).
- the predominance of **absolute** over **relative** gains, which means that (according to neoliberals) states pursue the former (Powell, 1991).
- the organising role of anarchy in which a greater variety of forms of cooperation occur than presented in the neorealist school (Powell, 1994; Baldwin 1993; Koehane & Nye, 2012).

As to what distinguishes constructivism from neorealism:

- neorealism does not take under account cultural and social processes that shape international structures. Constructivists make this one of their central points;
- states' pursuit of different goals is conditioned by their particular identities and the unique way in which they perceive reality;
- anarchy as an organizing principle is not materially determined as presented by neorealists. Each state may perceive 'anarchy' in its own way (Wendt, 1992; Ruggie 1998).

To be more specific, one of the most comprehensive criticisms of neorealist theory has been gathered in a volume edited by Robert O. Keohane "*Neorealism and its critics*". (Keohane, 1986a). For instance, John Gerard Ruggie in his article "*Continuity and Transformation in World Polity: Towards a Neorealist Synthesis*", states that Waltz misses the main points which trigger structural change, namely unit-level processes (Ruggie, 1986, p. 152). Robert Cox in "*States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory*" claims that neorealism does not take under account "the human factor" (Cox, 1986). Richard Ashley on the other hand accuses neorealism of "ideological narrowness" (Ashley, 1986). Finally, Keohane in "*Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond*" by referring to key problems raised by Marks, Wallerstein or Gilpin, claims that they cannot be answered within a neorealist framework (Keohane, 1986b). A constructive and harsh critique of Waltz was also presented by Paul Shroeder in his "*Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory*". Schroeder rejects the theory and even closes his paper by "advising international historian students not to adopt the neo-realist paradigm" for the following reasons: Firstly, the central concept of neo-realist theory, namely 'self-help' is vague and unclear and would require a more in-depth explanation. Secondly, that the relationship between 'self-help' and 'balance of power' and the insistence on force in international relations is in general wrong because states (especially small ones) cannot afford to apply such strategies. Last, but definitely not least, in international relations there are patterns of behaviours for instance 'hiding' from threats or 'transcending' which haven't been taken under consideration by Waltz. (Shroeder, 1994, pp. 116–117, 148)².

Another problem considering neorealist thought refers to its central assumption that is its value as a systematic theory. Some authors, such as Inna Hamati-Ataya, Merton Kaplan or Bear F. Braumoeller claim that Waltz's research cannot be considered

² For instance, these could entail the adoption of different variations of neutrality (hiding) or attempting to 'surmount international anarchy and go beyond the limits of conflicting politics by referring to institutional arrangements involving consensus and the application of international norms' (transcending).

as systematic at all. While systematic theories should clearly define the ‘**boundary conditions**’ of ‘the system’ as well as recognize the concept of ‘**subsystem dominance**’ Waltz’s research does not meet these conditions³. Such statement can also be supported by making reference to other systematic theories in other sciences. For instance, the concept of ‘**boundary conditions**’ is a major concern in the studies of Niklas Luhman and Ross Ashby who indicate that for a systematic theory to be valid the system itself has to be **isolated from its environment**⁴. Waltz does not even mention about the processes of ‘**homeostasis**’ or ‘**feedback**’ between the ‘system’ and ‘environment’. Another problem is that while systematic theories refer to the complexity of system-environment relations and avoid generalizations, Waltz’s theory is general in nature (Ashby, 1960, pp. 18, 29; Luhman, 2002, pp. 121–130; Easton, 1966, pp. 97–99). Following the observations of Kaplan, there is a clear distinction between general and systematic theories. While the first, such as Newton’s general theory applies to ideographic information only and does not take under consideration the environment, systematic theories such as Kepler’s heliocentric theory focus on the relationship between the different components of the solar system and how they interact. (Kaplan, 2014, p.55.). Summarizing, Waltz seemed to mold the features of general and systematic theories which, as already mentioned, drew much criticism.

³ Inanna Hamati-Ataya states that Waltz’s “lack of specification of boundary conditions under which his theory would hold precluded the formulation of any significant scientific propositions” (Hamati-Ataya, 2014, p. 27). “Although Waltz acknowledged that macro and micro need to complement each other, his claim that his theory was a ‘systems theory’ remained pure rhetoric, since his analysis was clearly structural (or general as the term is used in economics) and incapable of bringing actors significantly into causal sequences. (...) If Waltz had understood systems theory, and if he had understood correlatives, he would not have made the mistake of believing that subsystem dominance was contradictory to the notion of a system”. (Hamati-Ataya, 2014, p. 30). Morton Kaplan on the other hand states that “If Waltz had understood systems theory, and if he had understood correlatives, he would not have made the mistake of believing that subsystem dominance was contradictory to the notion of a system”. (Kaplan 2014, p.160). In his research Bear f. Braumoeller refers directly to Waltz and claims “that Systemic theories incorporate the entirety of the system; structural theories (as Waltz’s) focus only on the uppermost layer and “bracket” (that is, ignore) the rest”. (Braumoeller 2012, p.13).

⁴ Niklas Luhman in his book “*Introduction to systems theory*” in the chapter devoted to open systems on several occasions refers to such basic concepts as ‘equilibrium’, ‘disequilibrium’, ‘system-environment’ and ‘system-to-system relations’ ‘positive and negative feedback’ which are essential in systematic theory. (Luhman, 2002, pp.29–57). Ross Ashby introduces the concept of state-determined systems in which compose of an organism and its environment. Although in Ashby’s research the distinction between the ‘organism’ or ‘machine’ and its environment is conceptual and arbitrary, it has to be done (Ashby, 1960, pp. 36–41).

In defence of neorealist theory, Waltz himself, stated that the many ‘omissions’ in his general theory are **intentional** as taking under scrutiny too many aspects of international relations would result in the theory losing its explanatory value. Such a statement seems to have a certain degree of validity as even in the most complex systematic theories a model will represent a simplification of reality and it is futile to identify all variables which contribute to its complexity. (Luhman, 2002; Asby, 1960). Being more specific and referring to the field of international relations Rosenau, Hudson and Braumoeller who to a greater or smaller extent refer to systematic research all concur that **it is the ‘observer’ or researcher who in an arbitrary fashion decide which variables will and which will not be the subject of research.** (Hudson, 2012, p.14; Rosenau, 2012, p. viii; Braumoeller, 2012, pp.28–29). Although Waltz’s structural realism makes attempts of explaining international relations by reducing it to general principles applicable to all states, there is no fallacy in doing so. As it was proven in the earlier sections, and regardless of what ‘systematic purists’ may say, **Kenneth Waltz’s structural realism gave birth to macropolitical/structural or general studies in international relations which till today remains an inspiration** which itself is an added value. As proof, even such critics of neorealism as Keohane and Ruggie admit that in order for a theory to be ‘elegant’, ‘clear’, ‘logical’ and ‘applicable’, it has to be limited in scope and cannot grasp each and every aspect of the international reality. Also, what both authors agree on, is the fact that Waltz’s model passes the test of real-life applicability (Keohane, 1986a, p. 4; Ruggie, 1986, p. 152).

Europe, Russia and the Eastern Partnership: A Neorealist Perspective

While the end of the cold war marked a shift of the world order, it were the representatives of the neorealist school who saw that the clash between the West and Russia was something inevitable and structurally determined⁵. Mearsheimer claimed that

⁵ According to Waltz “It (NATO expansion) weakens those Russians most inclined toward liberal democracy and a market economy. It strengthens Russians of the opposite inclination. It reduces hope for further large reductions of nuclear weaponry. It pushes Russia toward China instead of drawing Russia toward Europe and America. NATO, led by America, scarcely considered the plight of its defeated adversary. Throughout modern history, Russia has been rebuffed by the West, isolated and at times surrounded. (...) NATO held naval exercises with Ukraine in the Black Sea, with more joint exercises to come, and announced plans to use a military testing ground in western Ukraine. In June of 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski went to Kiev with the message that Ukraine should prepare itself to join NATO by the year 2010. The farther NATO intrudes into the Soviet Union’s old arena, the more Russia is forced to look to the east rather than to the west. The expansion of NATO extends its military interests, enlarges its responsibilities, and increases its burdens”. (Waltz, 2000,

the world order (starting from 1991) in Europe was bipolar with the USA and Russia as being the main antagonists (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 382). The author presents the United States and European involvement against Serbia in Bosnia in 1995 and later during the war over Kosovo in 1999 as evidence supporting such a standpoint (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 378). By referring to realist terminology, we may state that **although during the cold war an important shift in the structure occurred and the distribution of capabilities between states changed in favour of the United States and the West, the Russian Federation (which replaced the Soviet Union) remained a power to be reckoned with. Also, with the rebalancing of the status quo and the decline of the USSR a power vacuum appeared in the post-soviet space which was exploited by the West.**

From the Russian point of view (if we look at the world from a neorealist perspective), the new situation meant a decrease of influence and the necessity to look to its borders (the application of self-help strategies). For the United States and its allies on the other hand, this posed a great opportunity for 'expansion'. In other words, by referring to the way in which Hans Morgenthau understood the behaviors of states (which was later adopted by neorealists), **while the Russian Federation pursued a policy of 'status quo' which was supposed bring a halt to the 'western expansion' the United States and western European states followed 'imperialist' ambitions**⁶. As

p. 22). Later in 2001 Mearsheimer in his "*The Tragedy of Great Nations*" showed similar concerns, More evidence that great-power war remains a serious threat in Europe arises from the fact that the United States maintains one hundred thousand troops in the region, and its leaders often emphasize the importance of keeping NATO intact. If Europe is "primed for peace", as many claim, NATO would surely be disbanded and American forces would be sent home. Instead, they are kept in place. In fact, NATO has moved eastward and incorporated the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland into its ranks. Why? Because there is potential for dangerous security competition in Europe, and the United States is determined to keep the forces of trouble at bay. Otherwise why would it be spending tens of billions of dollars annually to maintain a large military presence in Europe?" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 379)

⁶ Among many important scholar works of classics such as Nicolo Machiavelli and Tomas Hobbes it is the work of Hans Morgenthau, "*Politics among Nations; Struggle for Power and Peace*" which is considered a foundation for the Realist school of thought. According to Morgenthau, there are objective laws deeply rooted in human nature according to which states', just as humans' goal is to increase their domination over others (other states). Here the concept of power which he saw as a "psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised" plays a central role (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 14). Since power is understood as a certain "state of mind" it can be exercised through other means than military force (economics, persuasion, Ideology etc.). Morgenthau claimed that states do not abide by moral values and peace among nations can be maintained only by two devices, the self-regulatory mechanism of balance of power and the normative instruments in form of international law (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 9). What is

indicated, Russian behaviors, as a defensive stance against the expansion of the West perfectly fit to the realist and neorealist concepts. The Eastern Partnership, although not being a military enterprise, was perceived by Russian authorities as a direct threat to the vital interests of the Russian Federation. Just to provide the basic information about the Eastern Partnership (EP): the enterprise was supposed to encompass the former Soviet republics such as Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. It was devised as an alternative to the Union of the Mediterranean and provided a framework for cooperation which included free trade, visa agreements as well as institutional cooperation⁷. The EP was not meant to guarantee EU membership⁸. Huge emphasis was put on 'shared values' of the EU which included democratization, the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development⁹. While from an 'euro-centric standpoint' (if we can even accept such a standpoint), the 'expansion' of the EU manifested in the EP was perceived (generally speaking) as an opportunity for Europeans, Poles, Ukrainians, Georgian and even Russians which was due to the strong belief that democratic and liberal values common to all human beings (regardless of the regimes under which they live in). **The neorealist perspective did not perceive it in a similar manner. Following the words of Mearsheimer, "NATO enlargement, the EU expansion, and democracy promotion, were the West's tripple package of policies, which only added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite"** (Mearsheimer, 2014). Taking Mearsheimer's assumptions even further the United States and its European allies pursued an imperialist policy when a 'window of opportunity' appeared after the collapse of the USSR.

To provide evidence for the statement that Russia perceives international relations by neorealist standards, already in 1993, there was a shift from Gorbachev's 'defensive defense' to 'agresive defense' doctrine which envisioned the use of nuclear warheads in case Russian sovereignty is threatened (Kippfuth, 1993; Volkov i Balatsky, 2012;

however (from the perspective of this essay) the most important is Morgenthau's are the types of states' behaviour in international relations in accordance to which countries can pursue one of the following types of policies: (1) A policy of **status quo** that aims at the preservation (defending) of the status quo. (2) A policy of **Imperialism** which aim is to expand.

(3) A policy of **prestige/demonstration** of power which can serve either preserving or altering the status quo. (Morgenthau, 1948, pp. 21–22).

⁷ For more information about the origin, objectives and goals of the Eastern Partnership see: Council of the European Union, ("*Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*", 2009; Wojna, Gwiazdowski, 2009, p. 30; (Potocki, 2012).

⁸ For more information see (Kapuśniak, 2010, p. 42).

⁹ More about successful and failure of EaP see e.g.: (Makarychev i Deviatkov, 2012; Stępniewski, 2012, pp.19–21; Gromadzki, 2015; Sadowski, 2013).

Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 378). While Yeltsin accepted a more assertive multipolar (mnogopolyarnost) approach in international relations, a similar (and even more confrontative) stance had been introduced in the foreign policy concepts of 2008 and 2013 accepted by Presidents Medvedev and Putin respectively which outlined Russian foreign policy principles follows:

- as American Unipolarity is disappearing a new 'collective leadership of leading states' is becoming more transparent;
- in this new Reality, Russia has to secure its geopolitical position by accepting a more assertive stance;
- in the world, there are power centres that should receive special treatment in the Russian security framework (Lee, 2010, p. 34);
- Russia will not restrain itself from violating the independence of its neighbours if her interests are threatened (Chapter IV of the document) and any forms of interference made by western countries in general and the United States in particular will be met with a swift reaction (Federation, Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February, 2013, IV; Legvold, 2007).

Although the neorealist school separates the domains of foreign policy from the study of international relations on a structural level, in this particular case the documents do reflect how the Russian authorities behaved during the last few years. Here we can even make an assumption that the publications of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs were a demonstration of power (or a pursuit of the policy of prestige, following Morgenthau's types of behaviors of states) which, in this case were supposed to be a direct, stern warning to the United States and its allies that further expansion will be met with resistance (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 21–22). Thus if we accept the realist standpoint, the relationship between the West and Russia is quite clear. **Russia is defending its spheres of influence while the West is expanding them.** Both Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer in the years 2000 and 2001 in their publications warned American and western policy makers from 'expanding the borders of NATO and the EU' too far to the east.

Conclusions

To summarize, nowadays there seems to be a lot of criticism towards structural realism. In some cases it is justifiable, in others not. In general, it is true that the theory:

- omits processes occurring beneath the level of the nation states,
- does not take under consideration cultural and simplifies economic factors,

- underestimates the role of international organizations,
- does not differentiate states in regard to their behaviours on the international arena,
- treats states as rational profit maximizers.

However, we should remember that **all structural theories of international relations are general in nature and will always present a simplified version of reality.** David Easton in his classic volume “*the political system*” distinguished three types of theories. Firstly, there are **casual theories**: singular generalizations, that (according to the author) should not be considered as theories at all. Secondly, there are ‘**synthetic**’, or ‘**narrow-gauge**’ theories which consist of interrelated propositions which are designed to synthesize the data contained in an unorganized body of singular generalizations. Thirdly, there are **broad-gauge theories or systematic theories** that make attempts of establishing a conceptual framework within which an entire discipline is cast. (Easton, 1966, pp. 56–57).

Once applying Easton’s distinction, **structural realism would be categorized as a narrow-gauge, not a systematic theory.** In the domain of international relations the closest to the third category would be a sub-field categorized as foreign policy analysis (FPA) which objective is to devise actor or country-specific or middle-range theories that are centred around specific foreign policy decisions under specific circumstances (Hudson, 2014; Rosenau 2006, pp. 206–246; Snyder, Brook & Sapin, 2012, p.64). The question thus rises, do the above mentioned arguments make Waltze’s neorealist theory invalid? Certainly not. As the main objective of theorising is to bring us closer to understanding certain phenomenon, neorealism certainly has its prominent place in the field of international relations. If not for neorealism, the subfield of structural IR theories such as neoliberalism or constructivism would never come to existence. As to the the accusation that Waltz’s systematic theory is not systematic at all: names are contractual and **as long as the theory has explanatory power, the naming is of secondary importance.** A different issue refers to the real life applicability of the theory. Obviously, just as in case of Newtons general theory of gravitation, objects when confronted with a rich environment will behave differently when under laboratory conditions. The same refers to international relations. Neorealism, just as neoliberalism and constructivism is a general theory which by no means is supposed to describe all the behaviours of states under all circumstances. In some cases, under certain circumstances neoliberal principles will be more applicable to a country’s (also Russia’s) behaviour. **However, we can draw a general conclusion that in the case of the Russian Federation after the fall of the Soviet Union a neorealist understanding of global politics seems to be provisional in understanding the foreign policy decisions of the russian leaders.**

When the subject of relations between EU states and Russia are concerned, although structural realism presents a very much simplified vision of reality, it does seem to be applicable once explaining and even predicting the behaviours of states (such as the Russian Federation) which still have a more 'traditional' or 'power centered' outlook of international relations. There should be little doubt that it were the representatives of the neorealist school whose assessment of Russian foreign policy (as presented in this paper) to a greater or smaller degree, predicted the the behaviours of the Russian Federations. Still, neorealism seems to be helpless in the face of more complex economic or cultural processes, where neoliberal or constructivist perceptions of reality seem to be more adequate.

References:

- Ashby, A. (1960). *Design For a Brain: The Origin of Adaptive Behaviour*, London: Chapman & Hall.
- Ashley, R. (1986). "The Poverty of Neorealism". In R. Keohane (Eds.), *Neorealism and its critics* (pp. 255–301). New York : Columbia University Press.
- Baldwin, D. A. (1993). "Neorealism, Neoliberalism and World Politics". In D. A. Baldwin (Eds.), *Neoliberalism, Neorealism, the Contemporary Debate* (pp. 1–25). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Braumoeller, B. (2012). *The Great Powers and the International System: Systematic Theory in Empirical Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Chafetz, G. (1993). *Gorbachev, Reform, and the Brezhnev Doctrine: Soviet Policy Toward Eastern Europe, 1985–1990*. Westport: Praeger.
- Cox, R. (1986). "Social forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory". In R. Keohane (Eds.), *Neorealism and its critics* (pp. 204–255). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Council Of the European Union (2009). "Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit Prague, 7 May 2009"
- Easton, D. (1966). *The Political System*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Fearon, J. (1998). "Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations". *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1, 289–313.
- Goldman, M. (2008). *Petrostate: Putin Power and the New Russia*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gromadzki, G. (2015, February). "The Eastern Partnership after Five Years: Time for Deep Rethinking". *Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Union*, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536438/EXPO_STU%.
- Gunneriuson, H., & Bachmann, S.-D. (2017). "Western Denial and Russian Control: How Russia's National Security Strategy Threatens a Western-Based Approach to Global Security, the Rule of Law and Globalization". *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 46(1), pp. 9–29. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15804/psy2017101>.

- Holsti, K. J. (1970). "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy". *International Studies Quarterly*, 14(3), pp. 233–309.
- Hudson, V. (2012). "The History and Evolution of Foreign Policy Analysis". In S. Smith, Hadfield Amelia & T. Dunne (Eds.), *Foreign Policy, Theories, Actors, Cases*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 13–35.
- Hudson, V. (2014). *Foreign Policy Analysis, Classic and Contemporary Theory*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Kaplan M. (2014). *Transcending Postmodernism*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Kapuśniak, T. (2010). "Wymiar Wschodni Europejskiej Polityki Sąsiedztwa Unii Europejskiej. Inkluzja bez członkostwa?". *Centrum Europejskie Natolin*, 42, http://www.natolin.edu.pl/pdf/zeszyty/natolin_zeszyty_42.pdf.
- Keohane, R. (1986). "Theory of World Politics, Structural Realism and Beyond". In R. Keohane (Eds.), *Neorealism and its critics*, (pp. 158–204). New York: Columbia University Press
- Keohane, R. & Nye, J. (2012). *Power and Interdependence*. New York: Longman.
- Kipphut, M. (1993). "Re-Clawing The Bear, Russia's New Military Doctrine". *GlobalSecurity.org*. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1993/KME.htm>.
- Kissinger, H. (1994). *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kościński, P. (2015, December 1). "Ukraina: DCFTA mimo wszystko". *Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych (PISM)*, https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=20996.
- Lee, H. (2010). "Multilateralism in Russian Foreign Policy: Some Tentative Evaluations". *International Area Review*, 13(3), pp. 21–49.
- Legvold, R. (2007). *Russian Foreign Policy in the XXI Century & the Shadow of the Past*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Luhman, N. (2013). *Introduction to Systems Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Makarychev, A., Deviatkov, A. (2012). "Eastern Partnership. Still a missing link in EU strategy?". *Centre for European Policy Studies Commentary [online]*, http://aei.pitt.edu/33335/1/Makarychev_&_Deviatkov_on_Eastern_Partnership.pdf.
- Mearsheimer, J. (2014). "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin". *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>.
- Mearsheimer, J. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. London & New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Mearsheimer, J. (1994–1995). "The False Promise of International Institutions". *International Security*, 19(3), pp. 5–94.
- Mesquita, B. B. (2002). "Domestic Politics and International Relations". *International Studies Quarterly*, 46, pp. 1–9.
- Mesquita, B. B., Smith, A. (2012). "Domestic Explanations of International Relations". *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15, pp. 161–181. <http://politics.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/2806/annurev-polisci-070209-174835.pdf>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2008). "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12

- July". *Foreign Policy Concept*. http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/foreign_policy_concept_english.pdf (Retrieved 15.02.2017)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2013). "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February". *Foreign Policy Concept*. http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/122186.
- Mission of Ukraine to the European Union, *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement – the complete texts*. <http://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/page/open/id/2900>.
- Morgenthau, H. (1948). *Politics Among Nations, The struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Pacer, V. (2016). *Russian foreign policy under Dmitry Medvedev*. New York: Routledge.
- Powell, R. (1991). "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory". *The American Political Science Review*, 85(4), pp. 1303–1320.
- Powell, R. (1994). "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate". *International Organization*, 48(2), pp. 313–344.
- Potocki, Ł. (2012). "Od Szerszej Europy- do Partnerstwa Wschodniego". In M. Pietraś, K. Stachurska-Szczesiak, & J. Misiągiewicz (Eds), *Europejska Polityka Sąsiedzka Unii Europejskiej*. (pp. 53–69). Lublin.
- Rosenau, J. (2006). *World Politics: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives vol. I*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Rosenau, J. (2012). "Foreword". In S. Smith, A. Hadfield, & T. Dunne (Eds), *Foreign Policy, Theories, Actor, Cases* (pp. V-X). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruggie, J. (1998). *In his Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Ruggie, J. G. (1986). "Continuity and Transformation in World Polity: Towards a Neorealist Synthesis". In R. Keohane (Eds), *Neorealism and its Critics* (pp. 131–158). New York: Columbia University Press. 8435/09 (Presse 78). http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf.
- Sadowski, R. (2013). "Partnership in times of crisis: challenges for the Eastern European countries' integration with Europe". *OSW Point of View* (36). https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/pw_36_en_partnership_net.pdf.
- Shroeder, P. (1994). "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory". *International Security*, 19(1), pp. 108–148.
- Snyder, J. (1991). *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Snyder, R., Bruck, H. W., & Sapin B. (2002). *Foreign Policy Decision-Making (Revisited and articles added by Valerie Hudson, Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier)*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan.
- Stępniewski, T. (2012). "Partnerstwo Wschodnie Unii Europejskiej: między realizmem a rozczarowaniem". *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 2, pp. 19–21. http://www.iesw.lublin.pl/rocznik/pliki/Rocznik_2012-190.pdf.
- Thorun, C. (2009). *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy, The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct towards the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Volkov, B., & Balatsky, A. (2012). "Changes in Russia's Military and Nuclear Doctrine". *Los*

- Alamos National Laboratory*. <http://permalink.lanl.gov/object/tr?what=info:lanl-repo/lareport/LA-UR-12-23486>.
- Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing.
- Waltz, K. (1990). "Realist Thought and Neorealist theory". *Journal of International Affairs*, 44(1), pp. 21–37.
- Waltz, K. (2000). "Structural Realism after the Cold War". *International Security*, 25(1), pp. 5–41.
- Wendt, A. (1992). "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics". *International Organization*, 46(2), pp. 391–425.
- Wojna, B., & Gwiazdowski, M. (2009). "Partnerstwo Wschodnie: geneza, możliwości i wyzwania". *Biuletyn PISM*, 24(556). https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=731.

Authors

Dr Maciej Herbut

University of Wrocław, Department of Social Sciences. Contact details: ul. Koszarowa 3, 51–149 Wrocław, Poland; e-mail: maciej.herbut@uwr.edu.pl.

Dr Renata Kunert-Milcarz

University of Wrocław, Department of Social Sciences. Contact details: ul. Koszarowa 3, 51–149 Wrocław, Poland; e-mail: renata.kunert-milcarz@uwr.edu.pl.