Power in International Relations: Insights from Realist and Liberal Theories

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Abstract

The concept or factor of power has been given great importance in the social sciences in general and in the fields of political science and international relations in particular. However, the concept of power is a vague and controversial concept and has been defined in various ways, despite being mixed with other concepts and terms such as authority, purpose, ability, oppression, influence and other concepts close to the meaning of power. Due to its significance, the concept of power has been explored through numerous studies and theories since ancient times. Above all, both realism and liberalism have interpreted the concept of power and its importance in the international arena. Realism and its thinkers emphasize military strength and strategic alliances for the survival and hegemony of the state, while liberalism and its thinkers emphasize economic dependence, institutional cooperation and adherence to international norms and values in order to achieve state security and influence. Based on the perspectives of the two major schools of international relations and political science, this study aims to interpret the concept and types of power in international relations. Simultaneously, it compares the perspectives of both schools and their thinkers and theorists on the concept of power and its significance in international politics.

Keywords: Power, hard power, soft power, realism, liberalism, international relations

Introduction

The concept of power in international relations is pivotal and multifaceted, serving as a cornerstone for understanding state behavior and interactions on the global stage. This paper offers a comparative analysis of the concept of power as articulated by the realist and liberal schools of thought. By exploring various theoretical perspectives, this analysis aims to elucidate how different schools interpret the nature, function, and implications of power in international relations.

Power, in the context of international relations, encompasses a range of forms and applications. It is often categorized into hard power, involving military and economic capabilities, and soft power, which pertains to cultural and ideological influence. Understanding these varieties is crucial for analyzing how states and other actors pursue their objectives and maintain their positions within the global hierarchy.

Realism, one of the most influential theories in international relations, emphasizes power as a central element in state interactions. Realists argue that the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to prioritize their own security and survival, often through the acquisition and demonstration of hard power (Waltz, 1979). This theory posits that international politics is characterized by a constant struggle for power, with states acting primarily out of self-interest.

Classical realism, as articulated by Morgenthau, views power as an intrinsic aspect of human nature and state behavior. Morgenthau argues that power is an end in itself, driving states to seek dominance and influence in an inherently competitive world (Morgenthau, 1948). This perspective underscores the notion that international politics is a zero-sum game where the gain of one state often corresponds to the loss of another.

Neorealism, or structural realism, introduced by Kenneth Waltz, refines the classical realist perspective by emphasizing the structural constraints imposed by the anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979). Unlike classical realism, which focuses on power as an end, neorealism views power as a means to ensure security. States are driven to maximize their capabilities to achieve a balance of power and prevent potential threats.

Neoclassical realism expands upon neorealism by incorporating domestic factors and leadership perceptions into the analysis of power. This theory suggests that the internal characteristics of states, such as political leadership, national identity, and domestic politics, influence how states perceive and pursue power (Rose, 1998). Neoclassical realism provides a more nuanced understanding of how internal and external factors shape state behavior.

Liberalism offers a contrasting view to realism by emphasizing the role of international institutions, economic interdependence, and the promotion of individual rights in shaping international relations. Liberals argue that

cooperation and collective action can mitigate the anarchic tendencies of the international system, reducing the emphasis on power politics (Keohane, 1968).

Classical liberalism, grounded in the ideas of thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, posits that international peace and security are achievable through the promotion of individual rights, democratic governance, and international cooperation (Kant, 1917). This theory critiques realism for its deterministic view of power and advocates for a system where mutual interests and moral considerations guide state interactions.

Neoliberalism, building on classical liberal principles, emphasizes the importance of international institutions and regimes in facilitating cooperation and reducing conflict (Keohane, 2005). Neoliberal theorists argue that power can be exerted through soft power mechanisms, such as diplomatic influence and economic ties, rather than solely through military means (Nye, 2004). This perspective highlights the potential for achieving international goals through collaboration and mutual benefit in an interdependent world.

This analysis reveals distinct perspectives on power within realism and liberalism. Realism, with its focus on hard power and state security, views international relations as a struggle for dominance where power is a primary tool for ensuring survival. In contrast, liberalism emphasizes the potential for cooperation and the role of international institutions in mitigating conflicts. While realists highlight the importance of power as a means of security, liberals argue that power dynamics can be transformed through international reforms and collaborative mechanisms.

Understanding the concept of power is essential in international relations, as different theoretical perspectives offer distinct interpretations of its nature and influence in global politics. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the contrasting views on power within the main schools of international relations "realism and liberalism". By examining classical realism, neorealism, neoclassical realism, classical liberalism, and neoliberalism, this study seeks to elucidate the evolving nature of power and its implications for international politics.

This research employs a descriptive-analytical and comparative methodology, relying on library-based literature to explore the diverse perspectives of key thinkers within these schools. Through this approach, the paper discusses how different theories conceptualize power and influence in international affairs, offering insights into their contributions to our broader understanding of global interactions and state behavior.

Power and its Varieties in International Relations

The renowned American researcher Joseph S. Nye, who has conducted numerous studies on the concept of power and its various forms, describes

power as follows: "Power is like the weather; everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it." Just as farmers and meteorologists attempt to forecast the weather, political leaders and commentators try to describe and predict shifting power dynamics. Power is also like love: it is easier to experience than to define and measure; but that doesn't diminish its importance and reality. Due to its importance and necessity, and to understand the meaning of power and its types in international relations, we will first discuss the concept of power and its various forms.

The concept of power, in its basic sense, can be defined as "achieving the desired outcome of an event by doing whatever is necessary" (Morgenthau, 2005). In other words, power is the ability of "A" to influence "B" to do something that "B" would not do without that influence from "A" (Karim, 2023). While power in international relations means having the ability to influence the behaviour of other actors to achieve the goals of the state. At the same time, there are various methods to influence the behavior of individuals, states, and other entities. Examples of these methods include threats and coercion, offering financial incentives and material benefits, and persuading the other party through deception, among others (Nye, 2004).

Power is a key concept that has significantly contributed to the development of international relations as a social science. In a sense, a substantial portion of the most notable research in this field is centered on the concept of power. The concept of power is often superficially associated with the realist approach; however, the liberal approach also assigns significant importance to power, albeit with different perspectives. Additionally, other trends and approaches also regard power as central to their interpretations but offer varying definitions and understandings (Özdemir, 2008). In this paper, we concentrate on the schools and thinkers of realism and liberalism, examining the meaning of power and its types within the context of international politics.

Regarding the different types of power in politics and international relations, it should be noted that the division of power into several different types and forms depends on the classification and division described by Joseph Nye. Because in the past, the military force of the state was the only dominant form of power in international politics, and it was used as a tool to achieve the highest and strategic interests of the state. On the other hand, Nye's classification of power into various types underscores the importance of diversifying sources of state power to effectively achieve state objectives within the international system (Nye, 2004). In this context, we will define and interpret the different types of power in international politics according to Nye's classification.

- First, Hard Power: Hard power in international politics refers to the use of tangible material tools, such as military assets like tanks and

warplanes, or the imposition of sanctions and economic restrictions, to compel a state to act against its will. Obviously, the theory of realism places significant emphasis on a state's military power, including both its use and the threat of its use. Realists believe that to protect the state and secure its interests within the international system, it is crucial for the state to enhance its military capabilities through the acquisition of modern weapons and technology, and to form military alliances with other states to maintain the balance of power among countries (Morgenthau, 2005).

For researchers and theorists of realism, hard power includes not only a state's military capabilities (both their use and the threat of their use) but also an economic aspect. This economic dimension involves the imposition of economic sanctions, whether by a state or an international organization, on another state to advance its own interests and goals (Dumankaya, 2019).

- Second, Soft Power: This concept, introduced by Joseph Nye in the early 1990s, refers to the ability of one state to persuade another to take certain actions without resorting to military force, threats, or coercion. According to Nye, for the success of foreign policy, a state must utilize its soft power in conjunction with its hard and military power to achieve its objectives. In other words, a state does not always need to rely on occupation and military force to achieve its goals; it can employ other forms of soft power to persuade other states. Examples of soft power include diplomacy, media, education, culture, trade, investment projects, and religious institutions (Nye, 2004). It is important to note that while realism and its theorists emphasize the importance of hard power, the liberal school and its theorists place significant emphasis on soft power.

- Third, Smart Power: is a strategy that combines both soft power and hard power, leveraging the strengths of each to achieve a state's objectives more effectively (Nye, 2011). When Joseph Nye first introduced the term "smart power," it coincided with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the war with the Taliban. Nye argued that the United States should not rely solely on hard power or military force to succeed in the conflict. Instead, he advocated for a combination of soft power and hard power to effectively achieve its goals. To that end, the Washington government can more easily achieve its goals in the war through diplomacy, communications and economic cooperation (Omar, 2019). Nye believed that smart power represented a strategic blend of hard power and soft power, distinct from each of these powers on their own. He viewed it as a new and modern tool for achieving state goals. Nye also emphasized that, through the use of smart power,

the United States could enhance its global hegemony and influence, as well as better justify its actions abroad (Gallarotti, 2015).

Nye believed that smart power could be a crucial concept for establishing global peace while also presenting a different side of America to the world. Especially since, in foreign policy, the United States has historically focused more on hard power or military force to achieve its goals. For these purposes, the United States and other countries can strategically employ all available powers, capabilities, and resources to effectively counter their opponents (Nye, 2011).

- Fourth, Electronic Power (Cyber Power): Power based on information resources is not a new concept; however, cyber power is relatively new. While there are numerous definitions of cyberspace, "cyber" generally refers to electronic and computer-related activities. One definition describes cyberspace as an operational domain defined by the use of electronics to exploit information through interconnected systems and their associated infrastructure. Power in this context depends on the specific resources and characteristics of the cyberspace domain. Acknowledged as a novel and rapidly evolving dimension of strategic influence, cyber power leverages electronic and computer-related activities to exploit information through interconnected systems and their infrastructure. This domain is characterized by its dynamic nature and its impact on both national security and global interactions (Libicki, 2009). According to Martin C. Libicki, cyberspace serves as an operational domain where power is defined by the control and manipulation of information and digital infrastructure. This includes using cyber capabilities to gain strategic advantages, conduct espionage, or disrupt adversaries' systems, reflecting the unique characteristics and resources of the cyber domain.

- Fifth, Sharp Power: The concept of sharp power has been used by some Western countries and researchers to describe certain diplomatic activities of China in countries governed by liberal democracies. The term "sharp power" is generally used to describe when a country employs manipulative diplomatic policies to influence and weaken the political system of a targeted country. They also claim that through such activities, China aims to undermine the democratic processes of states by influencing their decision-making mechanisms (Walker & Ludwig, 2018). Sharp power is a new concept and phenomenon used to create influence in international politics, particularly in an era where information plays a crucial role and can act as an effective weapon. In this way, powerful states seek to influence or even alter the policies of countries by leveraging information and communication technologies. In political literature, this practice is often interpreted as an attempt to

weaken Western states from within. In other words, sharp power involves interfering in the internal political processes of the targeted country, destabilizing it, and threatening its national security by influencing public awareness and behavior. Practitioners of sharp power do not aim to win hearts and minds as soft power does. Instead, they conduct information operations to penetrate the political and media spheres of other countries, with the goal of creating influence and subjugating their opponents. Tools and technologies of sharp power include hacking personal emails, stealing information, distorting the flow of information, using malware, and disrupting various networks and websites…etc.

The Realist School and the Concept of Power

As we have already mentioned, in the international relations literature, each school of thought interprets and evaluates the concept of power from its own perspective. Realism, in particular, has been a predominant framework for understanding and interpreting power in academic circles. One of the main reasons for this is that realism views world politics from a state-centered perspective. Although international and non-governmental organizations play active and important roles in international politics today, states remain the primary actors in the international arena. Another reason is that the school of realism defines a "state of war" as a continuous condition and links the principle of international politics with the concept of anarchism (chaos). Although there is no major global war today, regional and proxy wars persist in various regions (Mearsheimer, 2001).

There is no doubt that one of the main objectives of states is to gain and develop their own power. This objective is widely accepted among international relations thinkers, especially those aligned with the school of realism and its various branches. In other words, power for realist thinkers is akin to energy for physicists (Faraj, 2018).

According to the school of realism, power is the immediate goal, and international politics is fundamentally a struggle for power. However, the power referred to in realist analyses is not limited to classical military power alone; it also encompasses economic, ideological, and geographical powers. Or in its broadest sense, it is national power. National power is the means by which a state relies on to achieve its goals, following a specific pattern of foreign policy (Faraj, 2018).

Therefore, it can be said that power is a central concept and phrase that has received significant attention and is reflected in various theories within the realism school of politics and international relations. In a sense, for realism, power is defined by the degree of influence one unit or actor has over other units and their behavior within the international system in global processes

and interactions. Realism emerged as a prominent approach to interpreting international relations after World War II, particularly in the United States. Realists (researchers and theorists within this school) place significant emphasis on the role of power in international relations, focusing on the position and influence of state power within the international system. Realists believe that power determines the outcomes of international conflicts (Hussein, 2018).

Therefore, it is undeniable that the concept of power is closely associated with the theory and school of realism, particularly in the field of international relations (Yılmaz, 2008). Because, on the one hand, realists believe that the stronger a state is relative to its rivals, the less likely it is to be attacked (Mearsheimer, 2006). On the other hand, the means and mechanisms of the balance of power are considered more important and effective for imposing peace and stability, especially when compared to the idealists' reliance on international law and the establishment of a world government (Faraj, 2018).

That is why realists believe it is crucial to focus on the power factor as a means of achieving world peace, specifically by ensuring a balance of power among states. Although this balance is temporary and relative, it is seen as a way to prevent wars between states in the international system. Therefore, realists believe that power is a decisive factor in governing and directing all international interactions and movements (Hussein, 2018).

Although the school of realism has maintained its importance and position at the international level, it has not been free from criticism. Realism is constantly criticized for this reason: there are differing and contradictory views in the analysis of issues, particularly regarding the concept of power, its importance in international politics, and the characteristics of the international system. On the other hand, although realists believe that power is a fundamental aspect of international politics, it is undeniable that scholars within this school disagree on how to define and measure the concept of power. This is why critics of the theory, including those from the liberal school, argue that realism and its proponents have failed to provide a clear and consistent definition of power (Omar, 2019).

Although some criticisms of realism are accurate and relevant, others may arise from the lack of a unified perspective among realism scholars. These scholars typically fall into three main categories: classical realism, neorealism, and neoclassical realism. To delve deeper into the subject, we will explore how each of these schools of thought views and emphasizes the role of power in their theoretical frameworks.

The Concept of Power in Classical Realism Theory

Classical realism is the initial movement within the realism school, which specifically examines the significance and role of power in the international system. The first generation of realism responded assertively to the ideas and theories of the liberal school, critiquing them for neglecting the role and importance of power in international politics. In contrast, realism is deeply intertwined with the concept of power, rooted in the fundamental belief that international competition and conflict are intrinsic elements of global politics (Carr, 1939).

Classical realists have been notably successful in analyzing the role of power and its significance in international politics, as well as in making substantial efforts to integrate the concepts of power and global political dynamics. However, this does not mean that they have fully succeeded in this domain, as complications and disagreements among realists persist. Some realism theorists place significant emphasis on material factors such as state size, population, and military strength when interpreting and defining the concept of power. In contrast, others focus on intangible resources, as previously mentioned (Heywood, 2016).

In other words, for some realism theorists, power is considered an end in itself, while for others, it is merely a means to achieve the state's objectives. In classical realism, the desire to control others and accumulate substantial amounts of power is seen as a fundamental aspect of human behavior. This trait is mirrored in the behavior of states, which, reflecting individual tendencies, pursue their own interests relentlessly (Arı, 2004). To gain a deeper understanding of the views of the realism school, including classical realism, on the concepts of power, international politics, and related issues, we will explore the perspectives of key researchers and theorists. This examination will highlight their contributions and outline the significance of classical realism in the international arena.

At the pinnacle of the realism school, particularly classical realism stands Hans J. Morgenthau, a prominent figure in the field. In his influential work, "Politics among Nations" Morgenthau characterizes international politics as an ongoing struggle and competition focused on the acquisition, maintenance, and enhancement of power. Morgenthau also asserts that humans are inherently driven by power, with power serving as the primary source of human action and behavior. Similarly, in the realm of international politics, states are perpetually engaged in efforts to acquire and enhance their power, reflecting the same fundamental drive observed in individuals (Özcan & Çınar, 2014).

Morgenthau highlights two crucial concepts: power and interest. He argues that stability and peace are not permanent conditions but can be pursued through various measures, notably the balance of power. According to

Morgenthau, the international system is characterized by chaos and anarchy, lacking any overarching authority or power above the states. This lack of a higher authority compels states to justify the use of power and to view war and chaos as inevitable and persistent features of the international system (Morgenthau, 2005).

Another classical realist thinker, Edward Hallet Carr, contends that power fundamentally revolves around prevention and that humans possess an inherent drive to acquire power. Additionally, he regards the division of people into various groups, which leads to inevitable conflict and competition, as an undeniable reality (Carr, 1939).

Reinhold Niebuhr is another classical realist who believes that the human desire for life stems from an inherent quest for power, a trait also evident in various groups. This passion for survival and strength manifests in human behavior. According to Niebuhr, competition and conflict are unavoidable, making war and discord inevitable. Consequently, in this perpetual competition, there will always be winners and losers, leading to the continuous and unending nature of wars and chaos among states (Niebuhr, 1932).

Other theorists of classical realism, including Nicholas Spykman, Raymond Aron, Arnold Wolfers, George Kennan, Norman Graebner, Friedrich Schumann, and John Herz, followed the example set by the aforementioned thinkers. They concur on the inherent desire for power in both humans and states. Therefore, it can be said that the concept of power holds a central place and significant role in the view of classical realism. They also perceive international politics as a realm of competition and conflict among major powers. They agree that people and states inherently possess a selfish and belligerent nature. This nature causes the international arena to be viewed as a stage for the display of varying powers and interests, with states perpetually prepared to engage in conflict and attack one another (Hosseinzadeh, 2023).

The Concept of Power in Neorealism Theory

Neorealism developed in response to critiques of classical realism. This new approach to realism maintains a strong focus on the power factor, similar to classical realism thinkers. Most thinkers and theorists of neorealism concur with classical realism theorists on issues such as the nature of human conflict, self-interest, and the pursuit of power. However, they also differ from classical realism, particularly in their interpretation of power. For classical realism, power was often seen as an end in itself, whereas, for neorealism, power is viewed as a means to an end, with the ultimate goal being survival (Waltz, 1979).

If we examine prominent researchers and theorists of neorealism similarly to classical realism, we should begin by noting that the roots of neorealism trace back to the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes focused on the natural state of humanity, arguing that in the absence of a central authority to unify people, individuals exist in a state of constant competition and conflict. This situation has been translated from the domestic to the international system. Just as there is no central and sovereign authority within a state, the international system similarly lacks a supreme authority to which states are bound. Consequently, chaos is the defining characteristic of the international system (Hobbes, 1985).

Kenneth N. Waltz, considered the founder of neorealism, views power as an infinite means and defines it in terms of the distribution of capabilities. According to Waltz, abilities and resources are not evenly distributed in the international system, and this uneven distribution is a crucial factor in defining and understanding power. This inequality in distribution serves as a motivation, providing states with the opportunity to act and influence the international system. In his theory of "structural realism," Waltz distinguishes himself from classical realists by focusing on the structure of the international system rather than human nature to analyze international politics and state behavior (Waltz, 1979).

Waltz also identifies several key characteristics of the structure central to his thesis, including that it is anarchic and lacks a central authority above the states. States have their own sovereignty and independence without any hierarchical distinctions. Additionally, due to the absence of a higher authority and the anarchic nature of the international system, states share the fundamental responsibility to pursue their own security. Another characteristic of the international system's structure is that power is not evenly distributed among states. The varying amounts of power available to states are the primary reasons for their differences. Thus, to fully understand international politics, one must first grasp the distribution of power among states (Waltz, 1979.

According to Waltz, the lack of any authority above states means that they must rely solely on themselves for survival in the international system. He also argues that war is inevitable because there is nothing to prevent it. This perspective echoes Hobbes' centuries-old view of the world system as a "war of all against all." Waltz emphasizes that states must pursue the acquisition and development of power to secure their survival and ensure their safety. In his view, military power is crucial for providing security and guaranteeing the survival of states (Ertoy, 2019). Therefore, we conclude that power in neorealism is as crucial as in classical realism and is regarded as the most important factor in the international system.

The Concept of Power in Neoclassical Realism Theory

Neoclassical realism theory includes all the views and ideas of classical and new realism. According to this perspective of realism, international politics involves both the pursuit and struggle for power, as highlighted by classical realism, and the need for security driven by the chaotic nature of the international system, as emphasized by neorealism. This theory integrates the idea that states seek power due to inherent competitive motivations while also striving to ensure their security in an anarchic and unstable global environment. Although theorists of neoclassical realism focus significantly on power in international relations, they are divided into two main trends of thought: defensive realism and offensive realism (Hosseinzadeh, 2023).

Although both branches of neoclassical realism agree that the primary goal of states is to achieve security, they contend that this requires states to actively seek power. However, the main difference between the two views lies in their methods for ensuring security. Proponents of defensive realism argue that states should not react to every threat but focus on responding to specific external dangers. They believe that states should manage these threats through the balance of power mechanism, which they see as the most effective way to achieve peace and stability in the international system (Rose, 1998).

Defensive realists believe that states aim to acquire only the amount of power needed to secure their safety. Once they achieve a balance of power with potential threats, they cease further efforts to expand their power. They argue that weapons designed for defense are more effective and cost-efficient compared to those used for offense. Historical experience supports the view that defensive strategies are generally more successful and less costly for states than offensive ones. In contrast, proponents of offensive realism argue that only after disrupting the balance of power do powerful states attempt to dominate the international system by amassing significant powers. They view this aggressive approach as the most effective means to ensure security and believe that states must adopt assertive behavior to secure their survival. Mobilizing large powers is seen as the most effective way to ensure security, and states must adopt aggressive behaviors to guarantee their survival (Jervis, 1976). They will implement aggressive policies whenever the benefits are greater than the costs.

In other words, defensive realism argues that it is preferable for a state to have just enough power to maintain its security, as continuously increasing power could ultimately lead to its downfall. In contrast to defensive realism, offensive realism, as advocated by John Mearsheimer, argues that state foreign policy should be aggressive. Mearsheimer and other offensive realists contend that because the international system is inherently chaotic and the threat of attack is always present, states must adopt an offensive stance to secure their

interests and ensure their survival. Contrary to defensive realism, offensive realists believe that states must continually seek to acquire and enhance their power to achieve a level of hegemony and thereby ensure their security (Mearsheimer, 2001). Since no state can dominate the entire world, the competition to amass power remains a constant and perpetual phenomenon.

The Liberalism School and the Concept of Power

After World War I, liberalism gained prominence, emphasizing the stabilization and promotion of peace, as well as the eradication of war and its consequences. In general, liberal schools and thinkers believed that war, misery, and disasters could be ended through the establishment of international organizations. Under their influence, the League of Nations was established in 1920 to end war and establish lasting peace (Melanson, 1997).

Despite their differences, the various views and theories of liberalism in international relations generally share several key assumptions, one of which is the belief that human beings have a pure and benevolent nature. States can act in the interests of humanity and the world, not just their own. Liberals also believe that although the state is the main actor in the international system, it is not the only actor. Along with the state, other actors such as individuals, international organizations, and multinational companies play significant roles in international politics (Keohane & Nye, 2012).

In the view of the liberal school, the anarchic structure of the international system does not inherently lead to perpetual wars and conflicts between states, as claimed by the realists. Instead, liberals believe that states try to cooperate with each other to prevent and avoid the negative consequences of anarchy and chaos. At the same time, the behavior of states is largely influenced by international laws, institutions, and organizations that have the ability to stop and end war and chaos (Nye, 2004).

Regarding power, the liberal school and its thinkers believe that the continuous accumulation of military force, as the realists argue, is not the only way to ensure state security. Instead, they argue that states have more appropriate ways to provide security. While all factors of power are important, economic power plays the most significant and tangible role (Keohane & Nye, 2012).

In short, we can say that while realism and its thinkers place great importance on power and interests, believing that politics is nothing but power and interests, liberalism and its thinkers focus on several basic principles in international relations, such as ethics, human rights, values, and norms. According to these principles, classical liberalism and neo-liberalism within the liberal school have varying perspectives on the issue of power, which we will explore in two main topics.

The Concept of Power in Classical Liberalism Theory

Classical liberalism generally emphasizes the individual and their role in society, focusing on the positive aspects of human nature. In international relations, it highlights the importance of peace, dialogue, and mutual understanding. Classical liberals critique realism's justification that laws and rules in international relations are driven solely by national interests tied to power. They argue that these justifications stem from a set of ideas rather than reflecting the true nature of international life (Moravcsik, 1997).

According to classical liberalism, power is an element that should be limited and balanced. As previously mentioned, classical liberalism emphasizes principles such as individual freedom, private property rights, and limited government intervention. In this context, power refers to the responsibility of the state to protect and regulate individual rights in a limited manner, which is considered its fundamental function. In this context, power refers to the responsibility of the state to protect and regulate individual rights in a limited manner, which is considered its fundamental function. Classical liberal thought encourages state power to be confined to protecting individuals while allowing people to pursue their own self-interest under free market conditions. In this context, power is viewed as a tool that should ensure a fair balance between individuals (Bozdağlıoğlu & Özen, 2004).

Classical liberalism focuses on international cooperation and conflict prevention rather than the use of power in international relations. This approach integrates the humanistic principles of classical liberal theory into international relations and foreign policy. In this context, they emphasize the importance of the individual and assess international relations and interactions between states from a personal and human-centered perspective. By considering the individual as the basic unit of analysis, this theory approaches international relations with a multifaceted and pluralistic perspective. Consequently, its level of analysis and interpretation differs significantly from that of the realists. However, this theory was criticized for its failure to prevent two world wars, which led to the dominance of realism in the international arena (Arı, 2002).

Classical liberalism is closely associated with the work of Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham, both of whom criticized the international situation as barbaric. They believed that understanding and solidarity between states are possible alongside protecting the interests and economies of countries (Bentham, 2001).

The Concept of Power in Neoliberalism Theory

In response to the crisis in global financial markets that began in the late 1960s, liberal theory sought to reform and strengthens itself in the 1980s. This was partly due to the realization that traditional state-centric value sets

were insufficient to explain the international system. As a result, in the 1970s, "pluralist" thinkers laid the foundations for the theory and direction of neoliberalism (Varlık & Demir, 2013).

Neoliberalism, also known as institutional liberalism, builds on the core arguments of classical liberalism but adopts a more pluralistic perspective. It operates under the assumption that states are compelled to consider their own interests due to their "complex interdependence." The key difference between neoliberalism and classical liberalism is that classical liberalism focuses directly on the state, whereas neoliberalism emphasizes an international system composed of a network of international regimes and entities rather than a central state (Bozdağlıoğlu & Özen, 2004).

Neoliberalism emphasizes the importance of supranational cooperation and coordination between states. It highlights the role of regional and international institutions, as these institutions carry out functions that states alone may not be able to perform. They also believe that states can pursue their own interests without resorting to power, instead using trade, cultural and ideological influence, or so-called soft power. The concept of soft power, introduced by neoliberal theory, is particularly significant because it enables achieving results that hard power alone cannot accomplish. In terms of its components, soft power is associated with the immaterial aspects of power, such as culture, ideologies, values, institutions, and principles. In contrast, hard power is linked to the material tools of power, including economic conditions and the use or threat of armed and military force. Therefor from the liberal perspective, states can pursue their interests and goals by leveraging the strength of their culture and ideology, as well as their principles and values. They can also achieve this through their institutional strength, influencing the tendencies and directions of other states and parties in international processes, leading to coordination and rapprochement (Hussein, 2018).

Neoliberalism, regarding the efficiency of power and its role in achieving state goals and interests at the international level, posits that an indirect form of power is effective. This involves influencing others to align with the state's desires because they admire its values and aspire to reach the same level. This type of soft power encourages others to want what you want without using force or threats (Nye, 2004).

Neoliberalism emerged primarily through the work of Ernst B. Haas and David Mitrany, who focused on studying the unity and complementarity of states. In general, three main theses of neo-liberal theory and its thinkers can be identified:

- The state is not abstract and monolithic.
- Non-state entities and actors, such as multinational companies, institutions, and NGOs, play a major role in the international system,

with power being divided and fragmented among these entities. For this reason, the state alone is no longer able to control the environment and the international arena.

- The third thesis is that, in this environment, hard power and military force cannot be the sole instrument of authority and has largely diminished in importance due to the reduced risk of war between democratic states (Moravcsik, 1997).

In contrast, neoliberalism has faced criticism on multiple fronts, particularly regarding its assumptions about the role of the state, non-state actors, and the significance of military power. Key critiques include:

- Downplaying the Role of the State; Critics argue that neoliberalism underestimates the state's influence in international relations, often portraying it as less central than it actually is.
- Overstating the Influence of Non-State Actors; The theory is criticized for exaggerating the power of international organizations, multinational corporations, and other non-state actors while neglecting the control that states continue to exert over these entities.
- Debating the Shift from Military to Economic Power; Neoliberalism assumes that economic power has largely replaced military power in shaping global politics. However, many scholars challenge this notion, emphasizing that military strength remains a crucial factor in international security.
- Questioning the Effectiveness of Economic Interdependence; While neoliberalism suggests that mutual economic interdependence fosters peace and stability, critics argue that this assumption is overly optimistic and does not guarantee the elimination of conflicts (Keohane, 1989).

Although neoliberalism and neorealism differ in methodology and theoretical emphasis, their practical outcomes often align. Both recognize the persistence of power struggles in international relations, even if they explain them differently.

Conclusion

The concept of power remains a fundamental and widely debated issue in international relations, with realism and liberalism offering distinct interpretations. This study has demonstrated that power is not a monolithic concept but varies significantly across theoretical traditions.

Realist theories, particularly classical realism, neorealism, and neoclassical realism, emphasize power especially military strength (hard power) as essential for state security in an anarchic international system. While

classical realists view power as an end in itself, neorealists see it as a means to achieve security. Defensive realism contends that states seek only enough power to ensure survival, whereas offensive realism asserts that continuous power maximization and the pursuit of hegemony are necessary for long-term security.

In contrast, liberal theories, including classical liberalism and neoliberalism, challenge the realist notion that power is primarily derived from military capabilities. Instead, they argue that economic interdependence, international institutions, and cooperation contribute to stability and security. Classical liberalism promotes individual rights, limited state power, and peace through diplomacy, critiquing realism's emphasis on power struggles. Neoliberalism builds on these principles by highlighting the importance of international institutions and soft power mechanisms, such as cultural and ideological influence.

By analyzing these perspectives, this research provides a deeper understanding of how power operates in global politics and how different schools of thought shape international interactions. Recognizing these distinctions contributes to a more comprehensive grasp of the dynamics of power and its implications for contemporary international relations.

Furthermore, this study highlights the evolving nature of power in an increasingly interconnected world, where economic interdependence, technological advancements, and global governance play a growing role alongside traditional power structures. Future research should explore how hybrid strategies integrating both hard and soft power are shaping state behavior and international stability in the 21st century.

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