Basic elements of realism

1- States are the dominant actors

2- No principle of global order = situation of anarchy. In such situation, war is highly probable among states:

“To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism – it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason”

*President Obama in his Nobel Peace Prize Speech, Oslo, 2009*

3- States rarely pursue moral objectives (power politics)
Different definitions of realism

• **Offensive realism:**
  states are *power maximizers*

• **Defensive realism:**
  preference for the status quo, no interest in military conquest
Main sub-schools of realism

• **Balance of power theory**: internal and external balancing.

• **Security dilemma theory**: i.e. North Korea / Iran

• **Power transition theory**: China
Constructivism

• Constructivism is not a theory but a methodology

• Example: What does “vital interest” mean?
1- Obama’s rejection of ideological messianism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>George Bush</th>
<th>Barack Obama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Ranks 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; in Bush’s most used terms (Used 7 times as much as Obama)</td>
<td>Ranks 10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; in Obama’s most used terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>Ranks 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; (Used 7 times as much as Obama)</td>
<td>Ranks 12th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2- Emphasis on traditional security issues

- The term “nuclear” is used 2 times more by Obama than by Bush
- The term “NPT” is used 9 times more by Obama than by Bush
- The term “WMD” is used 3.5 times more by Obama than by Bush

Why Obama insists on NPT rather than on WMD?
3- Emphasis on large states

• Example: Russia

“Distancing ourselves from nuclear engagement with Russia would greatly reduce our knowledge of what is happening in Russia, hinder our ability to consult with Moscow in a timely manner on nuclear and national security issues, further strain our own defense resources, weaken our non-proliferation diplomacy worldwide, and, potentially heighten arms competition”

Senator Lugar
4- The domestic political choices of states are not relevant

“America cannot and should not seek to impose any system of government on any other country, nor would we presume to choose with party or individual should run a country.”

*Obama in Moscow, July 2009*
5- Deep skepticism toward military interventions