

## Man, the State, and War, Chapter 1, Kenneth Waltz

In this introductory chapter, Waltz sets forth the purpose of *Man, the State, and War*: to understand the causes of war. He seeks to find these causes to answer two important questions:

- 1) **Are there ways of decreasing the incidence of war (in other words, of increasing the chances for peace?)**
- 2) **Can we have peace more often in the future than in the past?**

Waltz seeks to answer the pressing questions of the present (or at least, the present as it appeared in 1959), by analyzing past political philosophers and competing theories, including those of St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Spinoza, and Kant.

Waltz begins by asking, can man's explanations of the origins of evil help explain the origins of war? (i.e., is war simply "mass malevolence" and therefore explained by in the same way as individual evil?). According to St. Augustine and Milton, the answer is yes: "men must look to man in order to understand social and political events." Others, particularly Rousseau, counter that it is society that corrupts man, rather than vice versa. Thus, like Plato, Rousseau claims that "a bad polity makes men bad, and a good polity makes them good."

Given these competing views, the question becomes: can man in society best be understood by studying man or by studying society? Waltz translates this question to the topic of war by drawing the analogy between men living in society/states and states living in "a world of states" (i.e., a "society"). **Should we, he asks, emphasize the role of individual states in causing war, or should we focus primarily on "the society of states" as the reason for conflict?** According to Waltz, two camps have historically emerged with different answers:

- 1) **Plato, Kant, and the nineteenth-century liberals** sought to explain war by the evil qualities of some or all individual states. In this view, "if bad states make wars, good states would live at peace with one another."
- 2) **Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau**, in contrast, emphasized that the "state system" is the cause of war. This is the realist view: though a state may want to remain at peace, balance-of-power concerns often dictate that it go to war.

To these two camps, Waltz adds the previously mentioned third, the group which believes that war and conflict is caused directly by man's evil nature. Thus, for Waltz, the answers to the central question of his book – **where are the major causes of war to be found?** – can be grouped into three "images" of international relations:

- 1) within man
- 2) within the structure of the separate states
- 3) within the state system

Each of these images, Waltz states, lead to different – and often contradictory – explanations of war's causes and prescriptions for the prevention of future conflict. Finally, Waltz states that a true explanation of war's causes may ultimately require a combination of these three images in order to paint a truly accurate picture of the nature of international relations.