1. 195 (circa) sovereign states

2. There exists no legitimate source of authoritative decisions and no law enforcement mechanism to compel the peaceful resolution of conflicts, i.e., there are no agreed-upon rules or norms of behavior and there is no supra-national organization or authority with the power and legitimacy to impose or maintain order.

3. There are significant degrees of conflict among nations stemming from different histories, cultural norms and values, political and economic priorities and needs.

4. So, international relations are shaped basically by power---this shapes who gets what, how, and when.

5. Thus, international actors always operate under the potential threat of war.

6. Because the power potential of each nation-state is uncertain/unknowable in the abstract, wars must be fought to demonstrate which states in fact possess the greatest amount of power.

7. Many theories of the causes of war focus on irrationality, conspiracies, and elite manipulation. Thus, one is attracted to the idea that in most cases people are led or duped into war.
8. But, most wars involve very real incompatibilities between the basic moral objectives of two (or more) sides. In other words, do not assume that most wars are the result of irrationality.

9. The suggestion by reformers, observing this “realist” view of IR is: if we want to increase the possibilities for peace, we must work toward the establishment of norms---and processes---that make it possible for a community of peoples and states to develop.