



IN MEMORIAM

Kenneth N. Waltz
Professor of Political Science, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1924-2013

Kenneth N. Waltz, Ford Professor of Political Science, emeritus, passed away on May 12, 2013, in New York City, three weeks shy of his 89th birthday.

Waltz was a towering figure in the field of international politics, arguably the leading international relations theorist of the last half century. He established himself as a prominent scholar early in his career with the publication of his first book in 1959. *Man, the State, and War* is still in print— indeed a digital version is now available— and it continues to be a mainstay of undergraduate courses. Waltz's lasting contribution was to provide a typology for the causes of war which helped to organize the then nascent discipline. First- image explanations locate the causes of war within man. Hans Morgenthau, for example, attributed war to man's desire for power. Second- image accounts explain war in terms of the structure of states, e.g., democracies versus authoritarian states, capitalist versus socialist. Henry Kissinger makes this kind of argument when he links international instability to revolutionary states. So do those who argue that democracies do not go to war against each other. Going back to Jean- Jacques Rousseau's stag hunt, third- image explanations find the causes of war to lie in the international system itself and, more specifically, in international anarchy. Even if every individual and every state were good, conflicts of interest would still arise. After all, conflicts or, more politely, differences in taste or circumstance make gains from trade possible. But in the anarchy of international politics, there is nothing to prevent a state from trying to resolve these differences through the use of force.

Theory of International Politics, published in 1979, further defined the field for the next decade. Whether agreeing or disagreeing with Waltz, virtually every other international relations scholar began by locating his or her work in terms of Waltz. Long before game- theoretic models made the approach common place, Waltz conceived of the international system in terms of the basic motivations of states and the strategic environment in which states interact in pursuit of their goals. He thought in terms of incentives and constraints. The most important factor defining the states' environment and affecting the stability of the international system for Waltz was the distribution of power. The broad patterns of relations among states are largely determined by their position in the hierarchy of power. Many were amazed that France and Germany found peace after the Second World War given their long history of violent conflict. Waltz was not. Both had fallen from the ranks of the great powers, and the primary axis of conflict had shifted to the two poles of the bi- polar world. That made the European Community and later the European Union possible.

Waltz argued famously and controversially that nuclear proliferation or, as he preferred to say, the spread of nuclear weapons makes major war less likely. Nuclear- armed states – be they the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, India and Pakistan during the 1999 Kargil War, or a nuclear- armed Iran and its rivals in a future conflict – are less likely to fight a major war against each other than they would be if

they did not have nuclear weapons. The obvious reading for Waltz of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the Kargil conflict was that “the presence of nuclear weapons prevented escalation from major skirmish to full-scale war.” A strong belief that both sides had a second- strike capability was enough to deter. More weapons and more nuclear options did not make things safer or more dangerous; they only wasted money.

An active scholar until the end of his life, Waltz reasoned in “Why Iran Should Get the Bomb” in Foreign Affairs a few months before he died that a nuclear- armed Iran, rather than being the worst possible outcome of the conflict, would probably be the outcome “most likely to restore stability to the Middle East.” By reducing imbalances of power, new nuclear states typically bring more rather than less regional and international stability. In the fall of 2002, Waltz joined a group of other international relations scholars in opposing the coming war with Iraq.

Born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Waltz received his B.A. from Oberlin College and his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1954, after serving in the United States Army during the Second World War and the Korean conflict. He taught at Columbia until 1957 when he left for Swarthmore College and then Brandeis University. He joined the Berkeley faculty in 1971 as the Ford Professor of Political Science. A scholar in great demand, he also lectured and taught at the London School of Economics, the Australian National University, Peking University, Fudan University, the United States Air Force Academy, and the University of Bologna. He returned to New York and joined the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia after retiring from Berkeley in 1994. A dedicated teacher, he continued to offer a graduate seminar until 2010 while dividing his time between homes in Manhattan and Harborside, Maine.

Waltz was President of the American Political Science Association (1987-1988) and received honorary doctorates from Copenhagen University, Oberlin College, Nankai University, Aberystwyth University, and most recently from the University of Macedonia in Saloniki, Greece, which he accepted in person in the spring of 2011. Married for 59 years, Waltz’s beloved wife, Helen “Huddie” Waltz, died in 2008. He was predeceased by a son, Michael, and is survived by two sons, Daniel and Kenneth Jr., and four grandchildren, Sarah Grace, Constantine, Thomas and Thomas Leonidas.

Robert L.
Powell
2013