

# The famous movie the godfather seen as an allegorical representation of the curre...

[Politics](#), [International Relations](#)



The Godfather, a suspenseful drama about organized crime in 1940's New York City, is also a functional allegory for international relations. At an international level, individual states behave similarly to individual people. With an absence of functional law enforcement, both well-connected mafia families and individual states operate like children on a playground. Some are more prone to negotiation while others are predisposed to using force to achieve their goals. The Godfather highlights each of these philosophies at different points in the movie through the different members of the Corleone family as they get their chance to act in a position of power.

Just like the kids on the playground, the first ideology that becomes apparent is that of realism. Vito Corleone is gunned down at a market by the Tattaglias, a rival mob family. This is easily comparable to a nation covertly assassinating an opposing leader. Sonny Corleone is eager to use force to assert that the family is still powerful and not a hegemon in decline, as Solazzo suggests when he says that the Don was slipping. When Sonny gets the news that his father has been attacked, he is out for blood and wants nothing other than to use violence to enact revenge. Both the initial attack on Vito Corleone and the response of Sonny are representative of the realist theory of international relations.

A political realist has specific beliefs about how the world operates and could also be considered a political pessimist. Realist philosophy dictates that there is no overarching power to hold states accountable. This means that more powerful states have supremacy over less powerful states and are able to achieve their goals at the expense of others. Therefore states must strive

to gain military might in order to defend themselves from others. Military power can be sourced from within a nation or through the acquisition of allies, but allies are considered by realists to be less useful than a state's own military.

The Tattaglia family attacked Vito Corleone in a realist move to grab power. Since there was no overall authority between the families, this action could have potentially gone unpunished. However, Sonny Corleone vowed to enact revenge on the Tattaglia's and Virgil Sollozzo. This highlights a flaw with political realism. Entities who attack others are always subject to revenge. After their attempt to profit from incapacitating Vito Corleone, Michael Corleone judiciously assassinated both Virgil Sollozzo and police captain Mark McCluskey. This shows how policies of political realism can backfire dramatically by establishing the precedent of violence being used to resolve differences.

The Corleone family also has an example of someone following the opposite approach to conflict resolution. Tom Hagen, being a lawyer, is accustomed to complicated situations of intricacy. Intricacy is a good way to summarize the liberal theory of international relations. Liberalism places great emphasis on negotiations and peaceful actions between nations. Proponents of this theory of international relations believe that problems are best solved using diplomacy rather than military might. Liberalists acknowledge power held by nations other than military strength, such as economic, political, and social influence.

Liberalism has its downsides as well. In the case of the Tattaglia's, a rogue party wanting complete control might not be willing to negotiate. Negotiation and diplomacy alone are unable to defend a nation against a military attack. Negotiation is only a valid tactic if a nation possesses sufficient force to back up what it says. Otherwise, a bigger, stronger, and more equipped enemy can simply attack and achieve the desired effect. However, assuming the Tattaglia family would be open to negotiation, liberal diplomacy could have potentially brought the conflict to an end for all parties. At the end of the movie, Vito Corleone himself met with the heads of all the mob families in order to establish a truce, using liberal diplomacy to bring an end to the bloody conflict.

As in the real world, *The Godfather* shows that different theories of international relations have benefits and drawbacks in different situations. Since there is no single policy that will work in all situations, an understanding of these theories is very important. It could be speculated that a liberal approach to the initial negotiations would have gone very poorly for the Corleone's, as the Tattaglia family would have been unlikely to negotiate. This is because they believed that their attack on Vito Corleone, using a realist approach, was going to propel them to the position of the most powerful family in New York. Likewise, had Vito Corleone followed a realist philosophy after he returned, it is likely that there would have been a vast loss of life. The war that would follow could potentially eliminate the remaining power of both the Tattaglia and Corleone families. Had this been the case, the story would have ended in a much different way. The balance

of power between the mafia families in New York was only maintained through judicious use of negotiation and force. This is a direct comparison to how states operate on a global scale, weighing options and determining the proper decision before they act. It is only through this process that the world can be as peaceful as it is today.