This chapter focuses on Cox’s core theoretical framework as it is set out in the two *Millennium* articles (1981, 1983) and in *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (1987). It also touches on Cox’s post-1987 thinking about aspects such as the changing world order (globalisation and the nature of the state), multilateralism, and civilisations. Cox’s modes of social relations of production typologies are discussed and related to his identification of three contemporary social hierarchies, the marginalised, precarious and integrated. I also point to the continuing relevance of the core theoretical framework for the analysis of the contemporary world order. Lastly, the chapter engages with the challenging requirement of the historic method to access the ‘collective images’ of subordinated groups (the marginalised).

**Engaging with Waltzian neo-Realism**

In light of the fact that CCT and three of the four authors (see Chapter 5) associated with a critical theory of IR (Ashley, Linklater and Hoffman), set out their arguments in opposition to Waltz’s (1979) *Theory of International Politics*, this section provides a brief overview of Waltz’s book. Arguably, Waltzian neo-Realism was one of the major issues that dominated the ‘inter-paradigm’ debate during the 1980s (Griffiths, 1999: 47). The reactions were mixed, but the critics were vociferous in their condemnation of an argument that they believed was *status quo* orientated (supportive of bipolarity and superpower politics). The debate led to the publication of an edited volume by Robert Keohane in 1986, *Neorealism and its Critics*. 
Waltz starts by setting out the criteria and assumptions that underpin the deductive-nomological model of explanation, which is prevalent in the natural sciences, but more contested in the social sciences. He regards it as a superior approach to ‘the problem of explanation’ and much more likely to lead to the ability to predict and control than the inductive approach to the development of theory. His understanding of theory ‘...does not accord with usage in much of traditional political theory, which is concerned more with philosophic interpretation than with theoretical explanation’, but relates more to how it is used and understood in the natural sciences and also in certain disciplines in the humanities (for example, Economics) (Waltz, 1979: 6). In this sense, Waltz sets up his explanatory theory of international politics (based on the systemic principles of the balance of power and the absence of central authority) as ‘scientifically defensible’ (Griffiths, 1999: 47).

In contrast to the prevalent ‘interdependence’ approach of the 1970s (Keohane and Nye, 1971; Keohane and Nye, 1974; Keohane and Nye, 1977 and Morse, 1976) Waltz emphasises the importance of focusing on the utilitarian (‘self-help’) state, functioning within the dynamics of an anarchic system. This is an essential point of departure for the construction of a good theory of international politics. Before setting out the principles of his ‘systemic’ or ‘structuralist’ explanation of state behaviour, however, Waltz (1979: 18, 38) turns his attention to two types of theory in the literature of international politics, ‘reductionist theories’ and ‘systemic approaches and theories’.

In the chapter on reductionist theories he examines and criticises Lenin and Hobson’s economic imperialism theories and Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism. These are found wanting because they attempt to link a systemic phenomenon, war, to the economic attributes (capitalism) of the stronger states (or similarly, but in Wallersteinian terms, the attributes of the ‘core’ states). To this argument Waltz (1979: 36) responds that many different types of states have, at some stage, followed imperialist policies, ‘Yet the theories we have examined claim that an imperial relation exists because the imperial state has certain economic attributes.’ Waltz’s point is that one cannot explain the functioning of any system by focusing on the attributes of the units, which are the component parts of that system.